

Berea Bible Handbook – Part Nine

The Minor Prophets of the Old Testament

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Commentary on the Minor Prophets, by Arno Clemens Gaebelein

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Introduction: Calling God's People

One of the important things to remember about the Bible is that it's more than a single book. It's actually a collection of 66 individual books written over several centuries by around 40 separate authors. In many ways, the Bible is more like a portable library than a single book. And in order to make the best use of that library, it helps to understand how things are structured.

The Minor Prophets are fascinating Bible studies into the working of God in the world. There is nothing more intriguing in the history of the people of God from Genesis to Revelation than the prophetic utterances that often came forth through man in time of desperate need. Isaiah walked through the land naked

and barefoot. Ezekiel laid on his left side for 390 days and on his right side for 40 more. Hosea married a harlot to illustrate the love of God.

The Minor Prophets are not called minor because they are unimportant but because of the size of their books. Prophets like Jeremiah, Isaiah and Ezekiel have large books and so these prophets are called the Major Prophets only because their books are larger, not because they are more important. The prophets of the Old Testament do not appear in chronological order but they are ordered in their sequence because the larger books of the prophets came first, just as in the Epistles or letters of Paul where not written in chronological or time-sequence order but according to their length, like Romans and 1 and 2 Corinthians come before the shorter books of Philippians and Ephesians. The reason we call them the Minor Prophets doesn't mean that their messages are minor. Indeed, these "minors" major in the major prophecies as we will see.

Although the warnings of the prophets were often scorned or ignored, they nevertheless dynamically challenged the attitude and behaviour of the people. So, it was also with the Minor Prophets as we will see in our Bible studies of the twelve lesser prophets. The utterances of God through the prophets will always arouse the curiosity of the people.

The Minor Prophets had no specific qualifications other than being moved upon by God as a vessel, a medium, whereby a specific word could be given. They came forth to speak their, "Thus, saith the Lord . . .," from many walks of life. They were shepherds, farmers, priests, and princes. As God so moved upon His chosen vessel, each of the Minor Prophets, the prophet so spoke.

The Minor Prophets, the last twelve books of the Old Testament, are referred to as minor prophets only because their writings are considerably shorter than the writings of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel. By putting all the minor prophets together their writings roughly equals the length of a major prophet's scroll. The contents of their prophecies were as powerful and moving as the Major Prophets. The Minor Prophets were moved upon by the Holy Spirit and spoke not their words but the words of God flowing through them.

The Minor Prophets do not appear to be in strict chronological order. Although we will let each of the writing of the minor prophets give us the time of their prophecies, we can give a rough time-line of their writings. Two prophets, Obadiah and Joel may have preached in the ninth century B.C. (853-796). In the following century, five prophets can be connected to the time of 793-686 B.C.: Hosea, Amos, Jonah, Isaiah, and Micah. Nahum Zephaniah, Habakkuk, and Jeremiah prophecy in the next century: Nahum, around 663 B.C.; Zephaniah probably 640-609 B.C.; Habakkuk, around 612 B.C.; and Jeremiah began in 627

B.C. and continued past the fall of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. Daniel and Ezekiel preached the words of the Lord during the Captivity in Babylon. Daniel was taken into Captivity during the first invasion of Judah, 605 B.C. Ezekiel was taken to Babylon in 597 B.C. and continued his prophecies until roughly 571 B.C. Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi lived and preached after the Captivity: Haggai, 520 B.C.; Zechariah, about the same time; and Malachi, around 432 B.C. The Minor Prophets close out the writings of the Old Testament.

Brief overview of the twelve books we call the Minor Prophets.

Hosea

Hosea's name means "salvation" and his book was written primarily to the Northern Kingdom and as his name suggests, he seeks Israel's salvation by repentance, otherwise they face destruction and captivity, which eventually happens when the Assyrians invade and take the Northern Kingdom as slaves. The same problems that Hosea dealt with are those that seem to be present in today's secular world; syncretism and idolatry. Syncretism in the fact that there are a hodgepodge of mystery, false and cult religions and there is idolatry in the sense of people making entertainment, pleasure, or self the central focus of their life. The parallels of the Northern Kingdom and nations today are that there is a decline in the worship of God, of religion, and an increase in political, social justice, and moral depravity. Read the Book of Hosea and you will see similarities to many nations of the world today and the fate could be similar to that of the Northern Kingdom.

Joel

Joel's name means Jehovah or Yahweh is God or Lord. The main focus of the Book of Joel is the coming Day of the Lord. He writes about a coming judgment or destruction of the land's vegetation by locusts. Whether these are real locusts and they devour crops in a time of drought or they are implements of war, we cannot be certain. Joel speaks of a "day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness" (2:2) but he also describes the judgment of the nations for crimes against His people (3:2-19). Although there appears to be a parallel between Israel being attacked and Christians being persecuted, the message seems to be specifically sent to the unrepentant nation of Israel, although many principles have application to those outside of the stock of Israel. God seeks to have His people return (repent) to Him with fasting, praying, and weeping (humbling themselves) before Him (1:13-14; 2:15-17).

Amos

Amos' name means "to carry" or "born (carried) by God." He primarily prophesied to the Northern Kingdom who had become comfortably wealthy and began to have a false sense of security. Amos focused on two areas of sin in both the Southern Kingdom (Judah) and the Northern Kingdom (Israel). Two of the greatest sins that were occurring in the Northern Kingdom are also prevalent today, such as social injustice and idolatry. There is so much corruption in governments of the world and this corruption leads down to the most remote small, rural towns. The idolatry of pleasure and prosperity takes the place of God because money can sometimes take the place of God and provide; security, food, and pleasures...but it is a false sense of security and that are what Amos tries to warn these nations about.

Obadiah

Obadiah means "servant of God" or "servant of the Lord." Obadiah tries to reassure Judah that Edom's vicious and deadly attack against them will be avenged by God Himself. This was written because Judah's faith was very weak and God wanted to ensure the nation that He still cared for His people and that He is always at work for them, even during evil times such as this time period. Today, the church faces growing persecution and believers need to turn to this book for reassurance that God will never leave them and that He will judge believer's persecutors in due time.

Jonah

Jonah's name means "peace" or "dove" of which a dove is symbolic of. Jonah shows us that you cannot run and you cannot hide from God or His express, divine will. There is no place to hide, nowhere to run, where God is not at. Jonah resisted until he was trapped in the belly of a great fish and even then he resisted wanting to save Nineveh because Nineveh was one of Israel's worst enemies and bitter rivals and those were the last people on earth that Jonah wanted saved. The lesson here for Christians may be that God desires all to be saved and even those who have been our enemies are people that God seeks to save and since He has compassion for them, so should we.

Micah

Micah's name means "who is like God?" The answer of course is no one is like God. He alone is transcendent. Micah's message was that the great disparity between the very rich and the very poor was a judgment against them. Greedy landlords (2:1-5) and political corruption had caused the entire nation to be

morally bankrupt (6:9-16; 7:1-7) so God rose up the great nation of Assyria to be His rod of correction to bring the nation under His righteous judgment. There are great similarities between ancient Israel and Judah and the nations today.

Nahum

Nahum's name means "comfort" or "comforter." Nahum's message was designed to bring a voice of relief, comfort, and joy for those who had been suffering under the hand of oppressive nations. These merciless nations will not go unpunished and this book is intended to comfort God's people with the fact that no crimes against them have escaped His sight. Most assuredly God will avenge His people and the relevance for believers today is that those who despitefully use us, unfairly accuse us, and shamefully abuse us will be dealt with by God so we must leave vengeance up to Him (Rom 12:19; Duet 32:35).

Habakkuk

This minor prophet's name means "embrace." What a comforting thought it is that God wants to embrace us during great trials and that we should embrace His Word. Habakkuk is consumed with a burning desire to proclaim the glory of the Lord. Habakkuk reminds the readers of Jeremiah's book because of his deep concern for the wayward people of Israel which had turned their back on God and on His covenant. Habakkuk gives hope because of the certainty of God's coming (3:3-7) and the assurance that He will judge the nations that are opposed to His purpose (3:8-15).

Zephaniah

This prophet's name means "hidden by God." The book begins with a universal declaration that judgment is swiftly coming and that the remnants of Israel and other nations will be saved in that day when He returns (3:9-13) and like Romans 8:28, that even the evil things that occur can be used to accomplish God's will. Even though Zephaniah speaks about a day of gloom and doom, God will save all who call out to His name and a remnant will be saved (3:11).

Haggai

Haggai's name has a much different name than most of the prophets. His name means "festive." Why festive? God does not name His people or prophets without purpose and so Haggai optimistically calls on His people to repent and rebuild His holy temple because the sovereign God desires to be worshipped and He is most worthy (1:8). God is concerned that His people have lost the desire

for God's presence. Haggai writes in the hopes that God's people will repent and then rebuild the temple and only then will God's presence return to them. Haggai wants to remind God's people that He desires to have a relationship with them (2:4-5).

Zechariah

The name of this prophet is a reminder to God's people that He will not forget His own, as Zechariah's name means "remembered by God." Zechariah is one of the prophets whose book mentions language that suggests a coming Messiah (2:5, 10) and even the coming of the Christ into the city riding on a colt (young donkey) which is fulfilled in the New Testament (9:9-10). Zechariah's language is that the interwoven nature of the present and the past cannot be separated and for this reason it makes it difficult to determine in portions of his book whether he is writing about things present or things to come.

Malachi

Malachi's name means "my messenger" and by the word "my" he means God's messenger. This last book in the Old Testament is like a final warning or parting shot to Israel that the great and terrible day of the Lord is coming (4:1-2). God is angry with the fact that His people are robbing Him of His tithes and offerings and also those they are not paying the laborer their due wages (3:1-8). Malachi also gives the prophecy that Elijah will come again just before the day of the Lord (4:5-6). This was fulfilled in the coming of John the Baptist who came in the spirit of Elijah preaching repentance (Mark 1:4; Matt 3:1).

Conclusion

One thing is certain and that is the fact that all of these prophets testify that the Lord is coming again but this time it will be to judge all of those that refuse to repent and trust in Christ. For the unrepentant, it will be swift and sudden judgment. There will be no second chance. Time may be short. If Christ returns at this moment or the next, and a person has not trusted in Christ after repentance, this doom will be too terrible to even describe with words (Rev 20:11-15). I am certainly no prophet but I can assure you that all of those who refuse to bend the knee today will bend it someday. We will all stand before the Lord to give an account for our lives. Jesus Christ is coming again and He will either be your Saviour or He will be your Judge.

The Minor Prophets Prophecies

Following the five books of the Major Prophets are the twelve books of the Minor Prophets. The word minor is in reference to the length of the books rather than importance when compared to the five books of the Major Prophets. The twelve prophets spanned a period from c. 845-425 BC.

The themes of the Minor Prophets are the same as with the Major Prophets: condemnation, warning, judgment and redemption. All prophecies regarding the first coming of *Jesus Christ, the Messiah*, have been fulfilled. Prophecies associated with the second coming of *Christ* are being fulfilled in our time.

Hosea – Israel’s adultery with other gods; God’s unfailing love and His plan of redemption

Joel – Judgment on Judah; God’s call to repentance; end time judgment at battle of Armageddon

Amos – Judgment on Israel and surrounding nations; end time restoration of Israel; inclusion of Gentiles

Obadiah – The coming destruction of Edom; Israel’s future repossession of its land, the Lord’s kingdom

Jonah – Jonah called to minister to Nineveh; his disobedience and the whale; Assyria’s repentance

Micah – The fall of Israel and Judah; the two advents of the Messiah; deliverance from the Antichrist

Nahum – Judgment on Assyria; the complete destruction of Assyria initiated by a flood

Habakkuk – Judah’s fall to Babylonian captivity; God’s sovereignty and His call to faith

Zephaniah – Judgment on Judah and surrounding nations; end time judgment and restoration of Israel

Haggai – Importance of the temple; future glory of the temple by *Christ*; judgment of Gentile nations

Zechariah – The two advents of *Christ*; judgment of nations; salvation of Israel

Malachi – Prophecy of a future messenger for the two advents of *Christ*; end time judgment

The Minor Prophets and their Messianic Prophecies

O.T. Text

N.T. Text

Subject

Hosea 11:1	Matthew 2:14-15	Jesus to return from Egypt
Joel 2:28-32	Acts 2:14-21	God's Spirit to be poured out
Amos 9:11-12	Acts 15:13-18	Gentiles would believe in the Messiah
Jonah 1:17	Matthew 12:39-40	Messiah to be three days and nights in grave
Micah 5:2	Matthew 2:1-6	The Messiah to be born in Bethlehem
Micah 5:2	Luke 1:32-33	The Messiah as an eternal king
Micah 5:4	John 10:11, 14	The coming shepherd of God's flock
Micah 5:5	Ephesians 2:14-17	The Messiah to be a man of peace
Zechariah 9:9	Matthew 21:1-9; Mark 11:1-10; Luke 19:28-38; John 12:12-16	The coming ruler on a donkey
Zechariah 11:12-13	Matthew 27:1-10	Thirty pieces of silver for a potter's field
Zechariah 12:10	John 19:37; Revelation 1:7	Looking on the pierced Messiah
Zechariah 13:7	Matthew 26:31; 26:55-56; Mark 14:27; 14:48-50	Striking the coming shepherd, the sheep flee
Malachi 3:1	Matthew 11:7-10; Mark 1:2-4; Luke 7:24-27	The forerunner to the Messiah
Malachi 4:5-6	Matthew 11:14; 17:11-13; Mark 9:11-13; Luke 1:16-17	The forerunner as Elijah returned

Through these historical arrangements and compilations we observe the categorical divisions and ordering of scripture as shown in the table below. The table shows first the divisions of literary type, then the order and placement of The Twelve.

Hebrew	Septuagint	Vulgate	Modern English
Law Prophets Writings	Law History Poetry Prophecy	Law History Poetry Prophecy	Law History Poetry Prophecy

Hosea	Hosea	Hosea	Hosea
Joel	Amos	Joel	Joel
Amos	Micah	Amos	Amos
Obadiah	Joel	Obadiah	Obadiah
Jonah	Obadiah	Jonah	Jonah
Micah	Jonah	Micah	Micah
Nahum	Nahum	Nahum	Nahum
Habakkuk	Habakkuk	Habakkuk	Habakkuk
Zephaniah	Zephaniah	Zephaniah	Zephaniah
Haggai	Haggai	Haggai	Haggai
Zechariah	Zechariah	Zechariah	Zechariah
Malachi	Malachi	Malachi	Malachi

Internal Arrangement of the Assyrian Period Prophets

The chronological order of the prophets of the second and third periods were well known to the collectors and determined their placement in the scroll of The Twelve. The order of the Assyrian Period prophets, however, was a combination of authorship, content, and geography¹⁴.

Hosea is placed at the head of the collection because his prophecies are the most comprehensive, just as in the collection of Pauline epistles Romans is placed first. The subsequent books of this period have no date given in the heading and so were arranged with a few guiding principles in mind.

First, a prophet of the kingdom of Israel was always paired with that of a prophet of the kingdom of Judah: Joel (J) with Hosea (I); Obadiah (J) with Amos (I); Micah (J) with Jonah (I); Habakkuk (J) with Nahum (I).

Second, the scope of the prophecies were paired together, and the relative sizes of the books were paired together. Thus Joel was paired with Hosea since both dealt with one particular part of the kingdom: Hosea with Israel; Joel with Judah. Obadiah was paired with Amos because of their size. Amos follows Joel because Amos begins with a quotation from Joel (Joel 3:16).

Amos and Obadiah might also have been placed together since Obadiah's prophecy might be regarded as an expansion of Amos 9:12.

There are possibly two reasons Obadiah was placed before Jonah and not Micah: First, Jonah lived in the reign of Jeroboam II, the contemporary of Amaziah and Uzziah, whereas Micah did not appear until the reign of Jotham. Second, Obadiah begins with the words, "We have heard tidings from Judah, and a messenger is sent among the nations," and Jonah was such a messenger.

A Chronological Listing of The Twelve, Approximate Dates, Historical Passages

The red block represents the Assyrian Period prophets, the blue the Babylonian Period, and the yellow the Persian Period.

	Book	Dates	Corollary Historical Passages
Red Block	Obadiah	848 - 841	2 Chron. 21:8-17; 2 Kings 8:20-22
	Joel	835 - 796	[Amos 1:2] 2 Kings 12:18; 2 Chron. 24:23
	Jonah	780 - 750	[Deut. 4:5-8] 2 Kings 14:25
	Amos	765 - 750	2 Kings 14:23-25
	Hosea	755 - 715	2 Chron. 26-32; 30:1-12; Isa. 36, 37
	Micah	740 - 690	Isa. 2:2-5; 2 Kings 16:3; 2 Chron. 28:2
	Nahum	630 - 612	2 Chron. 34, 35
Blue Block	Habakkuk	625	2 Kings 21: 10-16; 2 Chron. 33:10-16
	Zephaniah	625 - 610	2 Kings 22-24
Yellow Block	Haggai	520	Ezra
	Zechariah	520 - 515	Ezra
	Malachi	433 - 400	Nehemiah 13; Ezra

Themes of the Minor Prophets

There are several ways to look at the books of these twelve prophets: a focus on prophecies, biographical information, historical data, etc. If one were to focus on the impact of the messages, however, and pay particular attention to how their audiences might have responded, one could propose the following table of secondary titles and themes.

Book	Title	Theme
Obadiah	<i>Patience in Tribulation</i>	Overcoming "When will God do something about this?"
Joel	<i>Responding to Discipline</i>	What does God want when your soul is made a desert?
Jonah	<i>Responsible Evangelism</i>	Learning the proper motivation for evangelism
Amos	<i>Re-Learning God</i>	A refresher course on the Person of the Almighty
Hosea	<i>Unfailing Love</i>	Fidelity in the Home and in Worship
Micah	<i>Voices of Confusion</i>	Discerning cultic leaders who sound good
Nahum	<i>Foundations for Courage</i>	Building a persevering spirit
Habakkuk	<i>Waylaying Bitterness</i>	Turning roots of bitterness into praise
Zephaniah	<i>Personal Integrity</i>	Maintaining convictions among apathetic people
Haggai	<i>Managing Priorities</i>	Living with balanced priorities
Zechariah	<i>Last-Days Living</i>	Living from the perspective of eternity
Malachi	<i>Spiritual Health</i>	"Getting it straight" from the Great Physician

Endnotes

- 1 Norman Geisler and William E. Nix. A General Introduction to the Bible. Chicago: Moody Press. 1977. P. 20.
- 2 W.H. Griffith Thomas. How We Got Our Bible. Chicago: Moody Press. N.d., p. 10.
- 3 Ibid., p. 13.
- 4 Ibid, p. 13.
- 5 Geisler and Nix, p. 20.
- 6 Hobart E. Freeman. An Introduction to the Old Testament Prophets. Chicago: Moody Press. 1977. P. 135.
- 7 Ibid., p. 135.
- 8 Ibid., p. 135.
- 9 Geisler and Nix, p. 20.
- 10 A small excursus: we found it quite interesting to think of how Egypt was the

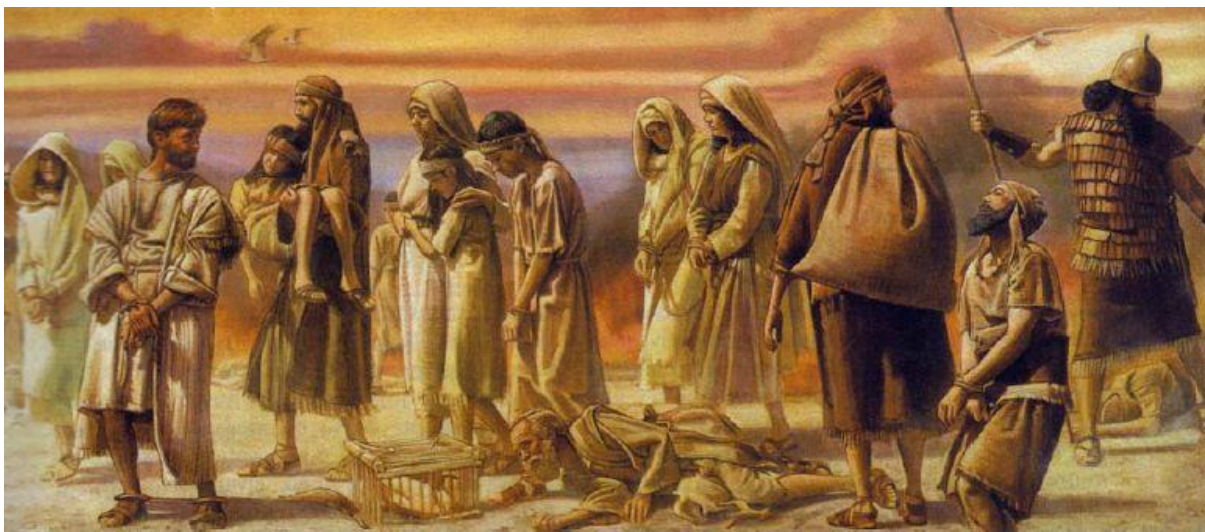
place that kept and nourished Moses, the Lawgiver, and through much pain brought Israel to the world. Now, so many centuries later, Egypt once again gives birth to the Law of Moses and presents a mature Israel to the world. This is an exciting example of God's superintendence of history and His vast providential care... and perhaps of His incredible humor.

11 Ibid., p 20.

12 Thomas, p. 16.

13 Geisler, Nix, p. 21.

14 The following is adapted from Keil and Delitzsh: C.F. Keil and F. Delitzsch. Commentary on the Old Testament. Vol. 10, "Minor Prophets". Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers. 1989.



Commentary on the Book of Hosea

by Arno C. Gaebelein (Public domain)

Introduction

The Minor Prophets begin with the book of Hosea. There are twelve of these books which are called by the name “minor prophets” not because their contents are of less authority than the preceding prophetic books, but on account of their size. The Jews considered them one book and the Talmud says of them, “our fathers made them one book, that they might not perish on account of their littleness.” The term “minor prophets” was used by the church in early days. Augustinus states: “The prophet Isaiah is not in the books of the twelve prophets who are therefore called minor, because their discourses are brief in comparison with those who are called ‘greater’ because they composed considerable volumes.” Jewish tradition claims that the present arrangement was made by the great synagogue formed by Ezra. This arrangement is not chronological. Joel

precedes Hosea, while Hosea, Amos and Jonah were nearly contemporary; Obadiah is difficult to place. The introduction to the book enters into the question of date. Micah, the Morasthite, ministered between the years 757 and 699 B.C. Nahum, the complement and counterpart of the book of Jonah, also prophesied during the period of Isaiah. Habakkuk is later than the preceding prophets. He speaks of the invasion of the land by Chaldeans as imminent; his prophetic office was probably exercised during the second half of Manasseh's reign. Zephaniah prophesied under the reign of Josiah, between 642 and 611 B.C. Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi are post-exilic.

Hosea and His Times

The first verse of the book determines the period of Hosea. He prophesied while Uzziah was reigning in Judah and Jeroboam II in Israel, as well as during the time when Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah were kings over Judah. His whole prophetic ministry covers probably over seventy years, so that he must have reached a very old age. His prophecy is directed almost exclusively to the house of Israel, which had degenerated in a short time and Hosea lived during these awful years. Jeroboam II was almost the last king who ruled by the appointment of the Lord. After him kings made their way to the tottering throne of Israel by murdering their predecessors. Shallum slew Zechariah; Menahem slew Shallum; Pekah killed the son of Menahem; Hosea killed Pekah. All was anarchy in Israel.

The religious conditions were still worse. Nearly all these usurpers had made alliances with foreign powers which resulted in the introduction of the immoral, corrupt Phoenician and Syrian idolatry. The first Jeroboam had set up a rival worship so that the people would not go to Jerusalem to worship in the divinely appointed way. Jeroboam had been in Egypt 1 Kings 11:40; 1 Kings 12:22) where he had seen nature worshipped in the form of a calf, This worship he introduced in the identical words which their fathers had used when they worshiped the golden calf in the wilderness. (See Exodus 32:4 and 1 Kings 12:28). Outwardly the different ceremonies of the law, the feasts of Jehovah, the new moons and Sabbath days, the sacrifices and offerings were maintained, but all was a corrupt worship. The calf was the immediate object of that idolatrous worship. They sacrificed to the calf 1 Kings 12:32; they kissed the calf Hosea 13:2 and swore by these idol-calves Amos 8:14. As Dr. Pusey states: "Calf worship paved the way for the coarser and more cruel worship of nature, under the names of Baal and Ashtaroath, with all their abominations of consecrated child sacrifices, and horrible sensuality." It led to the most awful sins and degradation. Here is a description of the moral conditions prevailing in the days of Hosea, a condition brought about by the false worship and departure from

God. Hosea and Amos acquaint us with it. All was falsehood Hosea 4:11; Hosea 7:11; Hosea 7:3; adultery Hosea 4:11; Hosea 7:4; Hosea 9:10; bloodshed Hosea 5:2; Hosea 6:8; excess and luxury were supplied by secret or open robbery Hosea 4:2; Hosea 10:13; Hosea 11:12; Hosea 4:11; Hosea 7:5; Hosea 6:4-11; Amos 4:11); oppression Hosea 12:7; Amos 3:9-15); false dealing Hosea 12:7; Amos 8:5; perversion of justice Hosea 10:4; Amos 2:6-16); grinding of the poor Amos 2:7; Amos 8:6. Adultery was consecrated as an act of worship and religion Hosea 4:14. The people, the king and the priests were all steeped in debauchery. Corruption had spread everywhere; even the places once sacred through Jehovah's revelation, Bethel, Gilgal, Gilead, Mizpah, Shechem, were special scenes of vileness and wickedness. Remonstrance was useless for the knowledge of Jehovah was wilfully rejected; they hated rebuke. To understand the message of Hosea and Amos these conditions, both religious and moral, must be fully understood.

The Message of Hosea

Like the message of other prophets Hosea's message is one of judgment and future mercy. He announced the coming judgment as certain and irreversible. They were to be led away into captivity. His sons and daughters born to him by Gomer, the daughter of Diblaim, expressed this coming judgment in their names which were given to them by divine direction. "Lo-Ruhamah"--I will have no mercy; and "Lo-ammi"--not my people. Then he announced in the name of the Lord, "I will cause the kingdom of the house of Israel to cease; " "I will have no mercy upon the house of Israel." "They shall be wanderers among the nations; "--"They shall not dwell in the Lord's land; "--"Israel is swallowed up; she shall be among the nations like a vessel in which is no pleasure." In the greater portion of his message there is an exposure of the people's moral condition and their impenitent state.

But there is also the message of mercy, which is found in the very beginning of the book. Here are a few of these comforting words, which still await their fulfillment in the day when they shall "seek the Lord their God, and David their King (the Messiah); and shall fear the Lord and His goodness in the latter days" (Hosea 3:5) :--"I will betroth her to me forever; "--"They shall fear the Lord and His goodness; "--"He will raise us up, and we shall live in His sight; "--"Till He come and rain righteousness upon you; "--"I will ransom them from the power of the grave, I will redeem them from death,"--"I will heal their backsliding; "--"I will be as the dew unto Israel, He shall grow as the lily, and cast forth its roots as Lebanon."

“It belongs to the mournful solemnity of Hosea’s prophecy that he scarcely speaks to the people in his own person. The ten chapters, which form the center of the prophecy, are almost wholly one long dirge of woe, in which the prophet rehearses the guilt and the punishment of his people. If the people are addressed, it is, with very few exceptions, God Himself, not the prophet, who speaks to them; and God speaks to them as their judge. Once only does the prophet use the form so common in other prophets ‘saith the Lord.’ As in the three first chapters, the prophet, in relation to his wife, represented the relation of God to His people, so in these ten chapters, after the first words of the fourth and fifth chapters; -- ‘Hear the word of the Lord, for the Lord has a controversy with the inhabitants of the land;’ -- ‘Hear ye this, O priests;’ -- whenever the prophet uses the first person, he uses it not of himself, but of God. ‘I,’ — ‘My,’ -- are not Hosea, and the things of Hosea, but God and what belongs to God. God addresses the prophet in the second person. In four verses only of these chapters does the prophet himself apparently address his own people Israel, in two expostulating with them (Hosea 9:1; Hosea 9:5); in two calling them to repentance (Hosea 10:12 and Hosea 12:6). In two other verses he addresses Judah, and foretells their judgment mingled with mercy (Hosea 4:13). The last chapter alone is one of almost unmingled brightness; the prophet calls to repentance, and God in His own person accepts it, and promises large supply of grace” (Dr. Pusey) .

We learn then from the message of this book, what is so largely written in all the prophets, that there is a glorious future in store for all Israel. Judah and Israel both will receive the promised blessing and glory in that day when the King comes back, when Ephraim joyfully cries out “I have seen Him” (Hosea 14:8) .

The conditions in Israel also find their counterpart in our own times. Christendom has turned its back in greater part upon the true worship, rejects the truth, yea the highest and the best God has given, the Gospel of Christ, hence the moral decline and apostasy and ere long a greater judgment than that which fell upon Israel.

The Division of Hosea

Hosea (meaning “salvation”) in his style is abrupt and sententious. As already stated in the introduction he is the prophet of the ten tribes, though Judah is also mentioned by him. The book begins with two symbolical actions commanded by Jehovah, to illustrate Israel’s adulterous condition and Jehovah’s enduring love for His people in spite of their faithlessness. This is followed by a terse prophecy as to the condition of the people for many days and their return in the latter days (chapters 1-3) .

The main portion of the book begins with the fourth chapter. This part begins with “Hear the Word of the Lord.” in this section their religious and moral degradation through the priests and their coming ruin is announced. Then follows a description of the judgment which was to come upon Ephraim (the house of Israel) and also upon Judah. This is beheld by the prophet in a solemn vision (Hosea 5:8-15), followed by a brief prophecy as to what will take place when the remnant of Israel returns unto the Lord (Hosea 6:1-3). Then the Lord reproves them for their inconstancy, their immorality, their lewd priests. From chapter 7 to 13 we have similar remonstrances, with renewed announcements of the judgments on account of their wickedness, idolatries, leagues with heathen nations; the judgment is to be exile. What is to be their lot is predicted. This punishment is not to be delayed; it will, however, not destroy them, but purge them, leaving a remnant. The last chapter is one of gracious promise of what will take place in the day of their return. The division of this book is therefore twofold.

I. THE REJECTION OF ISRAEL AS AN ADULTEROUS WIFE AND HER FUTURE RECEPTION AND RESTORATION: (1-3)

II. THE MESSAGES OF EXPOSTULATION, JUDGMENT, AND MERCY: (4-12)

There are different subdivisions which will be pointed out and followed in the analysis and annotations.

The book of Hosea is quoted a number of times in the New Testament. See Matthew 2:15; Matthew 9:13; Matthew 12:7; Romans 9:25-33; 1 Corinthians 15:55; 1 Peter 2:5; 1 Peter 2:10.

I. THE REJECTION OF ISRAEL AS THE ADULTEROUS WIFE AND HER FUTURE RECEPTION AND RESTORATION

Chapter 1

1. The prophet’s marriage illustrates Israel’s sin

Israel’s Sin and Promise of Restoration

1. The introduction (Hosea 1:1)

2. The prophet’s marriage and birth of Jezreel (Hosea 1:2-5)

3. The birth of Lo-Ruhamah (Hosea 1:6-7)

4. *The birth of Lo-ammi* (Hosea 1:8-9)

5. *The future restoration* (Hosea 1:10-11)

Verse 1. Introduction

Hosea 1:1. This superscription gives the period of Hosea's ministry. First stands the statement that the word of the Lord came to him. Hosea means salvation; his father's name, Beeri, means "my well." Both are typical names. Critics have pointed out that Hosea was undoubtedly a resident of the northern kingdom of Israel, yet he mentions but one of the kings of Israel, Jeroboam, while four kings of Judah are given in this introduction. Inasmuch as Hosea long survived Jeroboam, the king of Israel, and the Judaic kings extend far beyond the time of the one Israelitish king, it has been alleged that the second part of the superscription does not harmonize with the first. Such is not the case. The superscription is made in this manner for some purpose. Hosea marks his Prophecy by the names of the kings of Judah, because in Judah the theocracy remained. He mentions Jeroboam (the Second), whose reign ended in the fourteenth year of Uzziah, because he was the last king of Israel through whom God acted and vouchsafed help to the rival kingdom. All the other kings of Israel who came after Jeroboam, by whom the Lord sent deliverance to the ten tribes 2 Kings 14:27 were therefore recognized by the prophets of God; the kings which followed were robbers and murderers, whose names the Spirit of God finds unfit to mention in the prophetic ministry of Hosea.

Verses 2-9. Hosea divinely commanded to marry a harlot

Hosea 1:2-5. In the beginning of his ministry, when Hosea was a young man, the Lord commanded him to take unto him a wife of whoredoms and children of whoredoms, and that for the reason, because the land hath committed great whoredoms, departing from the Lord. This command was at once executed by the prophet; he took to wife Gomer, the daughter of Diblaim.

We are confronted with an interesting question. What is the nature of these transactions? Were they real events, that Hosea literally took this woman and had children by her, or were they nothing but pictorial, visionary illustrations of the spiritual adultery and unfaithfulness of Israel? Did the prophet actually and literally enter into such an impure relationship, or, is it wholly an allegory? Luther supposed that the prophet called his lawful wife and children by these names at a certain time to perform a kind of drama before the people and thus remind them of their apostasy. The objectors to the literalness of this incident, and defenders of the allegorical explanation, have pointed out that it would be

unworthy of God to command and sanction such an unchaste union. The allegorical meaning is entirely excluded by the text, which speaks of a literal transaction. All is related as real history, the marriage and the birth of the children. We quote first Dr. Pusey's words in support of the literal meaning of this command by the Lord.

"We must not imagine things to be unworthy of God, because they do not commend themselves to us. God does not dispense with the moral law, because the moral law has its source in the mind of God Himself. To dispense with it would mean to contradict Himself. But God, who is absolute Lord of all things which He made, may, at His sovereign will, dispose of the lives or things which He created. Thus, as sovereign judge, He commanded the lives of the Canaanites to be taken by Israel, as, in His ordinary providence, He has ordained that the magistrate should not bear the sword in vain, but has made him His minister, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. So, again, He, whose are all things, willed to repay to the Israelites their hard and unjust servitude by commanding them to spoil the Egyptians. He, who created marriage, commanded to Hosea whom he should marry. The prophet was not defiled by taking as his lawful wife, at God's bidding, one defiled, however hard a thing this was."

This is the strongest defence of the literal interpretation of this incident. But there is another interpretation possible, which we believe is the correct one. As the context shows the symbolical meaning of Hosea's marriage is to illustrate Israel's unfaithfulness. But Israel was not always unfaithful; she played not always the harlot. Of necessity this had to be symbolized in the case of the prophet's marriage. The question then arises, was Gomer, the daughter of Diblaim an impure woman when Hosea married her, or did she become unchaste after her marriage to the prophet? We believe the latter was the case. The Hebrew does not require the meaning that she was impure at the time of the marriage; in fact, as already indicated, the supposition that Gomer lived the life of a harlot before her marriage to the godly prophet, destroys the parallelism, which the prophet's message embodies, with the relation of God to Israel. The expression "a wife of whoredoms and children of whoredoms" simply intimated to Hosea what the woman he married was going to be. If not taken in this sense it would mean that Gomer had already children when Hosea married her.

Gomer was called "a wife of whoredoms" by the omniscient Lord, in anticipation of her future conduct. She fell and became immoral after her union with Hosea, and not before. In this way she became a symbol of Israel, married unto the Lord, but afterwards became the unfaithful wife. With this view, the entire prophetic message of Hosea in the beginning of this book harmonizes.

The name of the woman is likewise suggestive. Gomer, the daughter of Diblaim, means "Completion--a double cake of figs." Israel's wickedness is symbolized as complete and the double cake of figs is symbolical of sensual pleasures. And the prophet in spite of her unfaithfulness still loved her and did not abandon her. This illustrates Jehovah's love for Israel.

Then she bore him a son. Expositors have stated, "The children were not the prophet's own, but born of adultery and presented to him as his." But that can not be the meaning in view of the plain statement "she conceived and bare him a son."

The Lord commands him to call this son "Jezreel." Jezreel has likewise a symbolical meaning. It means "God shall scatter" Jeremiah 31:10; but it also means "God shall sow" Zechariah 10:9. Thus Israel was to be scattered and sown among the nations. Jezreel was the valley in which Jehu executed his bloody deeds. On account of his hypocritical zeal, the blood of Jezreel is now to be avenged, and the kingdom of the house of Israel would cease. Thus the name Jezreel (resembling in sound and form "Israel") indicates the speedy end of Israel, scattered and sown among the nations, on account of their whoredoms (see Ezekiel 23:1-49).

Hosea 1:6-7. Next a daughter is born. Here "bare him" as found in verse 3 is omitted. The prophet receives a name for her--Lo-ruhamah, which means "not having obtained mercy." Interesting are the two renderings of the Holy Spirit of this passage in the New Testament. In Romans 9:25 it is rendered "not beloved" and in 1 Peter 2:10, "hath not obtained mercy." Love and mercy were now to be withdrawn from Israel and they were to be taken away utterly.

Then the house of Judah is mentioned. They shall be saved by the Lord their God, because He has mercy on them. Their salvation was not by bow, by sword, or by battle, horses and horsemen. It was only a little while later when the Assyrian, who was God's instrument in the execution of judgment upon Israel, came before the gates of Jerusalem, but Jerusalem was saved in the manner as predicted here, not by bow or sword, but the angel of the Lord smote the army of 185,000 in one night. And later Judah was saved and a remnant brought back from Babylon. Then there is a future salvation for Judah in the end of the age.

Hosea 1:8-9. Another son is born and "God said, Call his name Lo-ammi, for ye are not my people and I am not your God." Lo-ammi means "not my people." Lo-ruhamah and Lo-ammi are symbolical of Israel's rejection and the withdrawal of God's mercy. That this is not to be permanent the next two verses make this clear.

Verses 10-11. Future restoration of Israel

Hosea 1:10-11. Abruptly we are transported from the present into the distant future, and a prophetic utterance of great depth follows. The tenth verse is quoted by the Holy Spirit in Romans 9:1-33 and gives full light on the meaning of the passage here. God's sovereignty is the theme of the ninth chapter of Romans: "And that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He has afore prepared unto glory, even us, whom He hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles. As He saith also in Osee (Greek form of Hosea), I will call them My people, which were not My people; and her beloved, which was not beloved. And it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not My people, there shall they be called the children of the living God" Romans 9:23-33. Here is the commentary of Hosea 1:10. It means first that Israel shall be reinstated; but it also means the call and salvation of the Gentiles, and Gentiles called in sovereign grace are to be constituted "the sons of the living God." It is a prophetic hint on the blessing to come to the Gentiles, and that blessing is greater than Israel's.

The eleventh verse is a great prophecy and remains still unfulfilled. Some expositors claim that it was fulfilled in the return of the remnant of Jews under Zerubbabel. But the Babylonian captivity is not in view here at all. The great day of Jezreel will come, when King Messiah, our Lord returns. Then shall Judah and Israel be gathered together under one head, and gather once more to their national feasts in the land.

Ethic – Moral Problem

(1) Did the Lord command Hosea to marry a harlot, or (2) did she become a harlot after his marriage, or (3) is the incident only an allegory? Since Israel, the Lord's adulterous wife, was not always unchaste, number two is possible. But the text apparently supports the first option, which does not, as some claim, impinge upon the holiness of a sovereign God.

How we live our lives is governed by ethics. Ethics is "human moral conduct according to principles of what is good or right to do." Our ethical values today descend primarily from a Christian ethic in which "a truly ethical decision, we are told, must be spontaneous, undirected, free - the individual's unfettered and uncoerced response to each new decision-demanding situation." The ethical values of today, especially **Christian ethics**, borrow and carry forward the

Hebrew ethics of the past. This essay is an attempt to survey briefly the literature of the Old Testament and to point out any common themes which may be apparent in the diverse literature which we encounter.

One factor which sets Ancient Israel apart from other religions of the time was its monotheistic basis. The ethics of Ancient Israel is historical and traditional as opposed to philosophical and theoretical. In Ancient Israel an ethical conception of God is attained, that is not philosophical but historical; while its view of the moral life is certain of justification not only by reason but by history. Thus God is looked upon as an ethical personality and is looked to as an example of good and right. In the Old Testament, God's voluntary (voluntary for God) covenant with man must be looked at as the prime, but not only, example of ethical value. The covenant's requirements is one source of all ethics, morals, laws, and justice in the Old Testament.

Within Ancient Israelite society, we are presented with considerable diversity. Society was divided into partisan groups. In the pre-exilic period alone we can discern the nomadic people who became the early settlers through to the priestly groups and the prophets. The social and cultural conditions of each of these groups contributed to their own ethical understanding and in turn to what could be considered an 'Old Testament ethic'. The individual contributions made by these differing elements in society demonstrate a tension between these groups, as a result of their different traditions and their different needs. The initial impression that we are given is that any 'Old Testament ethic' may not be a consistent ethic. This potential inconsistency, viewed against a background of a contrast between the primacy of Law or grace, has seen the Old Testament in the modern world placed firmly back into its ancient realm and with it its richness.

Whilst such diversity seems to be apparent in the ethical outlook of the Old Testament, it may be possible to isolate central features. As a result of this it may become possible to outline an understanding which approaches an 'Old Testament ethic'. One reason as to why such a more centralised approach is lacking in many studies of the Old Testament ethics can be identified in a statement made by James Gustafson: biblical ethics, he observed, is in itself, 'a complex task for which few are well prepared; those who are specialists in ethics generally lack the intensive and proper training in biblical studies, and those who are specialists in biblical studies often lack sophistication in ethical thought.' A person venturesome enough to engage in interdisciplinary work runs the risk of being tagged a dilettante by colleagues in each discipline!

It is the breadth of response though which remains characteristic of the nature of Old Testament ethics. For the utopian, Isaiah 2:4 becomes a standard; for the

hardened of heart Genesis 9:6 is the norm. It is in fact this diversity which has been at the heart of the many issues regarding the use of the Old Testament in the development of moral theology. The ability to select certain passages to support a wider cultural or theological movement, or to isolate particular passages to illustrate a certain moral argument has often led to the conclusion that the Old Testament's contribution to contemporary moral thought is limited. A valuable approach has been to use Old Testament passages to illustrate specific findings of moral theology. Might it not be of greater value to consider whether or not a more significant and less localised ethic exists on the broader canvas of the Old Testament? Selective attitudes to the texts raise strong questions about the authority of the Old Testament. If we are to be selective in our use of text, to what extent then do we need to reassess our understandings of authority and inspiration?

How is it that ancient Israel, and to a similar extent, early Christianity tried to secure conformity to certain moral practices and avoidance of others? The roles played by institutions (the cult, the school, the court of law, the state), family and kinship groups and key leaders need careful examination when attempting to understand why certain moral practices took priority. It is also important to consider the influence of tradition. The final form of the moral practices of ancient Israel may well have been influenced by how the past functioned for each new generation. Values, attitudes and lifestyles can often be instilled in succeeding generations by the subtle means of inculcation and regimentation and by the more obvious means of persuasion, coercion and legal control.

In recent years particular studies on moral understanding, whilst valuable in themselves, may not necessarily be useful in contributing to a broader picture. Whilst it is vital we understand Old Testament attitudes to issues such as; the role of women, concepts of justice, attitudes to other religions and races, to name some topical issues it can be dangerous to look at these models as isolated examples for the contemporary reader to follow. If the women of the Old Testament accepted happily their status, can the contemporary reader say that they were in fact oppressed? However, there are some issues, if addressed in the light of new readings allow the Old Testament to reinvigorate contemporary moral issues.

What then do we find in a preliminary reading of the Old Testament? We find that the perceived corpus of Old Testament ethical teaching can be found in the Pentateuch. Here are to be found sets of ordinances, precepts and guidelines as to how the people could mould their lives in the areas of the cult, ritual, social and moral practice in order to be in conformity with the will of God. Not only were such precepts to be practised, but they were also to be taught in word and

deed. (Dt. 6:1-4).

The Mosaic Covenant is a good example of ethical values and norms in the Old Testament. The Mosaic Covenant has three parts; the Decalogue, the Covenant Code; and the Holiness Code. The Decalogue is made up of apodictic (or absolute) law, it is unconditional and has no “ifs or buts” about it. Although legally vague, these commandments provide a basis for ethical norms in the Old Testament. The Covenant Code is made up of casuistic (or conditional) law, it has a characteristic formula: “if this happens, then that will be the legal consequence.” Much of the Covenant Code deals with property and parallels other ancient Near East law codes. The Holiness Code found in Leviticus 17-26 states what is holy, for example, “the phrase: ‘I, Yahweh, your God, am holy’” (19:2; 20:26) is the self-predication almost “tautological,” for holiness here has a theistic, rather than an exclusively moral, connotation.”

The covenant is presented in the Old Testament as a whole and as “the words of Yahweh.” Many of the laws within the covenant, especially in the Covenant Code are anachronistic. This reflects how successive generations continued to respond to Yahweh's covenant demand in the changing circumstances of their situation. Instead of using a philosophical or theoretical challenge to ethics, the Old Testament incorporates the needs of societal ethics into the actual history and traditions.

The prophets also grounded their appeals for right conduct in Gods demands for righteousness. This was done by raising their critical voices on religious and ethical issues. Israels obligation was to act with justice and mercy was a religious obligation. The prophet Amos bases this obligation on Yahwehs election of Israel and thus, implicitly in the covenant, as he recalls the exodus, the conquest and Gods others gracious favours. (2:9-11) He denounces all things in which men have put their confidence (3:15, 5:11). Even their cult centres would do them no good; because they had forsaken the God of justice, their ceremonies were only occasions for greater sin (4:4-5).

For Hosea, God with deepening tenderness will lead Israel into the desert, the place of honeymoon after the exodus, the time of her fidelity: there she shall learn again to respond to God in love (Hos 2:16-19). Like Amos, Hosea condemns injustice, but he shows greater concern about Israel's paganizing practices and religious aberrations.

The themes in Micah seem to revive an idea of the covenant that may had fallen into disuse. Though it may be that the prophet is suggesting a new way at looking at the relationship between Yahweh and Israel, one based on justice and righteousness, instead of on election and mistaken covenant loyalties Is Micah drawing his ethic from a broader canvas than the covenantal backdrop? Dell

suggests that it is in fact the influence of wisdom literature and of a wisdom-type ethic which has left a mark on the final form of the prophet.

The prophets saw mankind in its concrete reality and new that it was here that redemption had to be realised; unless the disorders within the individual, the disorders of society, the disorders between nations, were set right, redemption would be incomplete, and God's work cannot be less than complete.

The Wisdom literature is less explicit about the basis of morality, yet its influence can be detected in areas of the Old Testament literature. The Wisdom literature does not usually stress God's demands for righteousness, in the way the prophets are seen to do. Neither does the Wisdom literature make appeal to the Law or the idea of the covenant. Rather, the ethical outlook of the Wisdom literature is grounded in experience, the experience of the community. Yet the literature is not totally divorced from the Law and the covenant. "Fear God, and keep his commandments" (Ecc 12:13) is a reminder of the struggle for the Wisdom literature to keep experience in touch with the Law and covenant.

Such Wisdom influence can be seen in Deuteronomy. Deuteronomy contains a wider ethic than strict law based injunctions that may be the expectation of a law book. More general proverbs are reformulated as laws in Deuteronomy (Proverbs 20:10 and Deuteronomy 25:13-16). Dell argues that Israelite wisdom is part of a broader ancient Near Eastern phenomenon and as such has an influence on the ethical norms to be found in other texts. If this is the case then the Wisdom understanding and influence of ethical norms may need further investigation.

As links can be seen between the diverse genres of Old Testament literature so it may be possible to begin to suggest some common ideas in the corpus. Firstly the nineteenth and twentieth century has distinguished between the 'sacred' and the 'secular', such a distinction is not apparent in the ancient mind. Communion with God involves morality as morality is obedience to the will of God. Secondly, such a moral obligation on the part of the people is intrinsic to the covenant relationship. "I will be your God and you will be my people", the central text of the covenant relationship, is expressed in the consideration that righteousness consists of grateful obedience to God.

Thirdly it can be seen that in the Old Testament beyond God there is no authority, as such the decisions of God are beyond questioning. The very fact that an action is divine in origin, makes it just and right. The final form of Old Testament morality is legal by nature but I would hesitate to say that it is by necessity legalistic. The reason for such hesitation come from a need to reflect at greater length on the relationship between the legal and the narrative

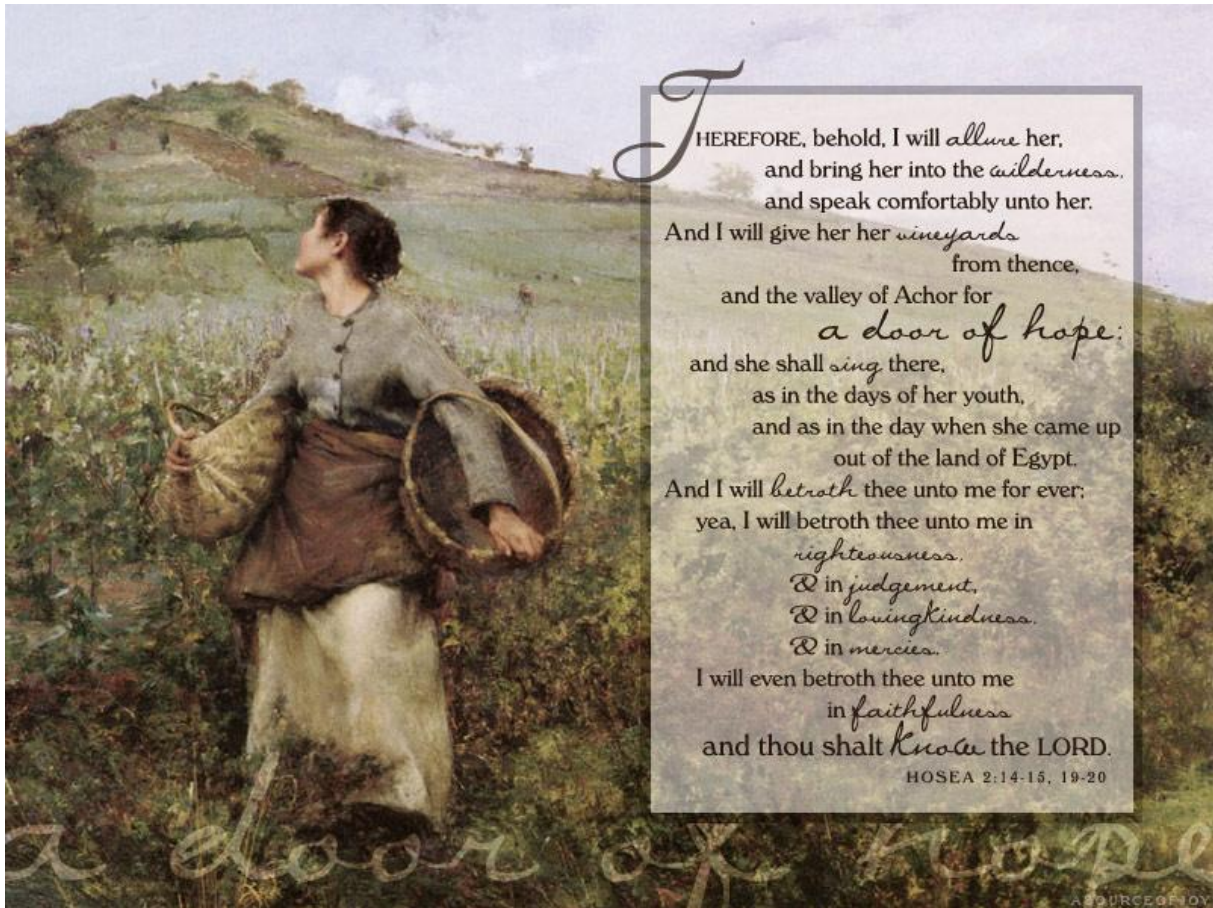
material. It may be the case that the narrative material in correspondence with the 'legal' material may offer a new insight and reading for the Old Testament ethicist. As an example we can see that if we turn to the Patriarchal narratives the gap between narrative and Law is not vast. Sinaitic law is intimated in the pre-Sinaitic period. The law of the Sabbath is a good example of this. This law is revealed in Genesis 2:1-3 and latter is revealed at least in partial form after the Exodus in Exodus 16. Certain Sinaitic laws were narrativised prior to Sinai.

Fourthly, the Old Testament has a distinctive concept of justice. It is distinct in the sense that it begins with the character of God rather than with a philosophical concept of human nature. Justice is not dependent on what people deserve in their humanity; rather, it is dependent on how God acts, because God is God. Justice is rooted in the divine, for if it was rooted in human nature, it would be rooted in something that is fundamentally flawed.

The final general characteristic of Old Testament ethics is that of the centrality of the community. Whilst such a community is of course made of individuals, the covenant relationship is with the community, mediated through individuals. Such a community ethic, whilst seemingly being in contrast to the Christian concept of a personal God, has distinct advantages. It is a stark reminder that the covenant relationship is with the whole community, not just a chosen few, and it also reminds the community that the problems of individuals are not isolated to individuals, but rather reflect the concerns of a whole nation. In response the judgement and justice of God is passed on the whole nation.

In conclusion, we must recognise that the Old Testament is neither an ethical treatise nor a handbook of morals. Neither is it a critical, systematic study of God and of the relationship between God and human existence. Rather, the Old Testament is a gathering of traditional materials that gradually emerged among the people of ancient Israel and eventually became authoritative statements about God, the nature of their believing community and their terms for living.

The question of how Old Testament ethics can or should be used in facing today's moral problems is a challenge which Christian and Jewish ethicists face. The Bible has too often been exploited to support slavery and the denigration of women in society; to advance all too simple solutions to issues such as abortion and capital punishment. As a result of such misuse and the potential for a new direction ethicists recently have been giving more attention to the question of how the Bible can be used in moral decision making.



Chapter 2

2. Israel's suffering for her harlotry

Appeal and Punishment for Unfaithfulness the Resumed Relationship

1. *The appeal and complaint* (Hosea 2:1-5)
2. *The punishment for Unfaithfulness* (Hosea 2:6-13)
3. *The resumed relationship and its great blessing* (Hosea 2:14-23)

Verses 1-13. Appeal and warning

Hosea 2:1-5. Who is addressed in the first verse of this chapter? Some think the children of the prophet are meant. The godly in Israel, those who obtained mercy, are addressed, for the Lord acknowledges such still as "Ammi"—my people. The godly are to plead with the rest of Israel their mother, but who is disowned by Jehovah as the wife, on account of her adulterous conduct. Then the Lord threatens her with severe punishment because of her unfaithfulness. She is to be stripped naked and be as in the day she was born (see Ezekiel 16:4).

Nor would there be mercy for her children because the mother, Israel, continued to go after her lovers.

Hosea 2:6-13. Her way is to be hedged up with thorns; a wall of separation is to be raised and to keep her from her lovers. And if she follow after them and make a sinful alliance with them (symbolical of the idol worship of heathens which Israel practiced) she would not find them. Thus she might return to her first husband, to Jehovah. Israel had received from the Lord corn, wine, oil, silver and gold. Then they attributed it all to Baal and used it in idol worship. In Hosea 2:9-13 the punishment is fully made known. She is to be left alone; the gifts and blessings will be withdrawn; her lewdness is to be uncovered, all mirth will cease and the days of Baalim, spent in licentious worship, would be visited upon her in judgment.

Verses 14-23. Israel to be restored

Hosea 2:14-23. Immediately after the announcement of her punishment follows the assurance or future mercy. Israel's conversion is promised (Hosea 2:14-17) and the great mercies of Jehovah's covenant are to be renewed (Hosea 2:18-23). The Lord of love will not forever abandon His people and though Israel has played the harlot so long, with no willingness to return unto Him, He Himself in infinite love is going to woo her back. He will allure her, as He brings her into the wilderness, and there speak "to her heart" (the Hebrew meaning). That will be in the coming day when the Lord will remember the remnant of His people during the time of Jacob's trouble and save them in that day. Then she will get her vineyards, her place of blessing, promised to Israel as His earthly people. The valley of Achor shall be the door of hope. In that valley Achan died, on account of whom all Israel had fallen under the ban Joshua 7:1-26. There judgment had been enacted and after that blessing was restored to Israel and the ban was removed. Achor means "troubling." When Israel is in that great trouble, the great tribulation, the valley of trouble will become the door of hope, for then the Lord will forgive them their sins, cover them with His grace and redeem them by His power. Then the singing times begin again for Israel. "She shall sing there as in the days of her youth, and as in the day when she came up out of the land of Egypt." Songs of praise on account of accomplished redemption by Jehovah's power will then burst forth Exodus 15:1-27; Isaiah 12:1-6. She will be fully restored to her former relationship, typified by marriage. "It shall be in that day, saith the Lord, that Thou shalt call Me Ishi (my husband), and shalt call Me no more Baali (my master)." She will be re-married to the Lord, symbolically speaking, and become the earthly wife of Jehovah, while the church, the espoused virgin, becomes in glory the Lamb's wife Revelation 19:6-21).

But greater blessing will be connected with that coming day of blessing, when Israel is received back Romans 11:15. Verse 18 tells us that creation will then be blest; the time of its deliverance has come. Here the same is indicated as in Isaiah 11:6-7 and Romans 8:21. The end of wars comes then and universal peace blesses the whole earth. This is always the order in the divine forecasts. First, Israel has to be brought back, and after that the blessings for the earth and the nations, including that peace, which the blinded world-church tries to secure without the Lord Jesus Christ. All these promises as to the future of Israel, her restoration and spiritual blessings, are unrealized. "It is infatuation to think that all this was fully accomplished in the return of a remnant from the captivity. The result is that even Christians, misled by this miserable error, are drawn away into the rationalistic impiety of counting God's Word here mere hyperbole to heighten the effect, as if the Holy Spirit deigned to be a verbal trickster, or a prophet were as vain as a litterateur. No; it is a brighter day, when the power of God will make a complete clearance from the world of disorder, misrule, man's violence and corruption, as well as reduce to harmless and happy resubjection the entire animal kingdom."

In that day all the great covenant blessings will return to redeemed Israel. Betrothed again to Jehovah in righteousness, in judgment, in faithfulness and mercies, Israel will know Jehovah. There will be an uninterrupted line of blessing from the heavens down to every earthly blessing. Heavens and earth will be gloriously united, and in answer to the call of His people the heavens will hear and cover all with blessing, for Satan's power is now gone. Israel is no more Lo-ammi, but they will be "His people" and He will be "their God," while the redeemed nation itself will be a blessing in the earth.

Chapter 3

3. Israel's future restoration

Israel's Past, Present, and Future

- 1. The past (Hosea 3:1-3)*
- 2. The present (Hosea 3:4)*
- 3. The future (Hosea 3:5)*

Verses 1-3. Israel's past symbolised

Hosea 3:1-3. The command here is not that the Prophet should enter into relation with another woman, but it concerns the same Gomer, the unfaithful

wife. It seems she left the prophet and lived in adultery with another man. “And Jehovah said unto me, Go again, love a wife, who is beloved of her friend and who is an adulteress; just as Jehovah loves the children of Israel, who have turned towards other gods, and love raisin cakes” (correct translation; used in the idolatrous worship). She is not called “thy wife,” simply “a wife”; yet the prophet is told to love the adulterous wife. This woman, whom the Lord commands Hosea to love, he had loved before her fall; he was now to love her after her fall, and while in that condition, in order to save her from abiding in it. It was for her sake that she might be won back to him. Such is the love of Jehovah for Israel.

He bought the adulteress for half of the price of a common slave Exodus 21:32; it denotes her worthlessness. The measure of barley mentioned reminds of the offering of one accused of adultery, and, being the food of animals, shows her degradation likewise. He thus was to buy her back, not to live with him as his wife, but that she might sit as a widow, not running after others, but wait for him during an undefined, but long season, until he would come and take her to himself. While she was not to belong to another man, he, her legitimate husband, would be her guardian. Israel’s spiritual adultery is in view in all this.

Verse 4. Israel’s present described

Hosea 3:4. Here we have direct prophecy, a very remarkable one, as to Israel’s present condition. It is to be their state for “many days.” These “many days,” unreckoned, are the days of this present age, in which Israel is in the predicted condition, while God visits the Gentiles, to gather through the preaching of the gospel a people for His Name, that is, the church. Their condition is to be threefold: Without a civil polity, without king or prince; without the appointed Levitical worship, no sacrifice; without the practice of idolatry, to which they had been given, without image, ephod and teraphim-- the distinctly priestly garment, the ephod; the teraphim, the tutelary divinities, which they used before the captivity. Before the captivity they had kings; now they have none, would have none; after the captivity Judah had princes; no princes during the “many days.” The real approach to God according to the Levitical service was to cease, for during the “many days” there would be no sacrifice. This has been Israel’s condition for nineteen hundred years. What a wonderful forecast of the present we have here! Clearly then, this describes the present condition of Israel--the most anomalous spectacle the world has ever seen--a people who go on generation after generation without any of those things which are supposed to be essential for keeping a people in existence. They have lost their king, their prince; they have neither the true worship nor the worship of idols. They are unable to present a sacrifice, because they have no temple and no more

priesthood. Here is an evidence of the supernaturalness of the Bible, one which no Jew nor destructive critic can deny.

Verse 5. Israel's future indicated

Hosea 3:5. Afterward--in the latter days. These two statements open and end the prophecy concerning their future. The “afterward” is not yet; the latter days are still to come. Their future is returning and seeking the Lord, their God and David their king. This is Christ. Nearly all the rabbinical writers and expositors explain it in this way. David himself this could not be. It is He who is David's Son and David's Lord, our Lord Ezekiel 37:23-28. Here we have the prediction of the future conversion of Israel to the Lord, in the latter days, the days of His coming again.

(The Targum of Jonathan says on Hosea 3:5 : “This is the King Messiah; whether he be from among the living or from the dead. His name is Messiah. The same explanation is given by the mystical books Zohar, Midrash Shemuel and Tanchuma. The greatest authorities among the Jews are one in declaring that ‘the last days’ mean the days of the Messiah; we have reference to Kirnchi, Abarbanel, Moses Ben Nacham and many others.)



There was probably a pagan shrine on Mount Tabor

II. THE MESSAGE OF EXPOSTULATION, JUDGMENT, AND MERCY

Chapter 4

4. Ephraim's attachment to idolatry

The Lord's Controversy with His People

1. *The condition of the people* (Hosea 4:1-5)
2. *The loss of their priestly relation* (Hosea 4:6-11)
3. *Israel's idolatry* (Hosea 4:12-19)

Verses 1-11. Fruits of idolatry

Hosea 4:1-5. This chapter begins with a terse description of the condition of the professing people of God. First, we have the negative side--no truth, no mercy, no knowledge of God. And there was no truth, because they had rejected the Word of the Lord, hence the result no mercy and no knowledge of God. It is so still whenever and wherever the Word of God is set aside. Then follows the positive evil which was so prominent in their midst: Swearing, lying, killing, stealing, committing adultery, and abundant shedding of blood. Such was the continued moral condition of the house of Israel, the ten tribes. It was all the result of having rejected the Word of the Lord and having turned away from Him. The result of unbelief, destructive criticism and denial of the truth is today, as it was then, swearing, lying, stealing, killing and the immoralities of our times. Therefore judgment would overtake all, even the land itself.

Hosea 4:6-11. The people were destroyed for lack of knowledge, the knowledge of God and His truth. They had lost their place of nearness to the Lord, their priestly character into which the Lord had called the nation Exodus 19:1-25. Therefore they would be rejected to be no longer in priestly relationship to Jehovah. And the priestly class was as corrupt as the people--"like people like priests." They were to be punished for their ways and their doings.

Verses 12-19. Description of Ephraim's idolatry

Hosea 4:12-19. Having left Jehovah they had turned to idols, asked counsel of a piece of wood and practiced divination. This abominable idol worship was practiced upon the tops of mountains. There, under trees, they gave themselves over to the vile rites of Baal-peor and Ashtaroth, both men and women abandoned themselves to the grossest sins of the flesh. And the Lord threatens that He would leave them alone in their vileness and not correct them, that they

might be brought back. The first chapter of Romans is illustrated by Hosea 4:14; they glorified not God, became idolators and then God gave them up to their vile affections.

Then there is a warning to the house of Judah in Hosea 4:15. The most sacred places, like Gilgal, had become the scene of the idolatry of the ten tribes. Bethel, the house of God, became a Beth-aven, the house of vanity. If Judah offended and committed the same whoredoms, she would not escape judgment. The warning was unheeded.

“Ephraim (the ten tribes) is joined to idols; let him alone.” Ephraim was too far gone; further remonstrance’s would not help, and so the evil is permitted to go unchecked, to run its full course.

Chapter 5

5-6. Message of rebuke and future mercy

Chapters 5:1-6:3

**The Message to the Priests, the People,
and the Royal House Judgment,**

Affliction and the Future Return

- 1. The message of rebuke (Hosea 5:1-7)*
- 2. The judgment announced (Hosea 5:8-15)*
- 3. The future return and the blessing (Hosea 6:1-3)*

5:1-14. The favour of the Lord withdrawn

Hosea 5:1-7. The first verse shows who is addressed: the priests, the house of Israel and the house of the King. Judgment was in store for them, for Mizpah and Tabor, the places of hallowed memory, had been turned by their idolatrous worship into a snare. An old and interesting tradition among the Jews states that at Mizpah the apostates waited for those Israelites who went up to Jerusalem to worship there, to murder them. The next verse seems to indicate something like this tradition.

“And the apostates make slaughter deep; but I am a chastisement to them all.” (We give the passage we quote in a better and more literal rendering. The Authorized Version is frequently incorrect.) (See also Hosea 6:9.) And the Lord saw it all. “I know Ephraim, and Israel is not hid from Me.” He knew the whoredoms of Ephraim and the defilement of Israel. Their evil deeds kept them from returning to their God, for the demon of whoredoms had taken complete possession of them and it kept them in sin and rebellion. Pride was the leading sin of Ephraim, it was to testify against them and both Israel and Ephraim would stumble on account of their guilt and Judah would share the same fate. And though they go with their flocks of sheep and their herds, willing and ready to sacrifice, they shall not be able to find Him, for He hath withdrawn Himself.

5:15-6:3. Future return and blessing

Hosea 5:8-15. Then follows a vision of judgment. The judgment is seen as having already fallen upon the guilty nation. The horn (Shophar) is blown in Gibeah and the trumpet in Ramah; the alarm is sounded. Gibeah and Ramah were situated on the northern boundary of Benjamin. The enemy was behind Benjamin pursuing. There will be no remedy and no escape (verse 9). “The princes of Judah have become, like the removers of landmarks: I will pour out upon them my wrath like water” (Hosea 5:10). A curse is pronounced in the law upon those who remove the landmarks Deuteronomy 27:17. Judah instead of taking warning from the disaster coming upon the northern kingdom, the ten tribes, sought gain by an enlargement of their own border. The princes of Judah, instead of weeping over the calamity, rejoiced at the removal of Israel as the means of removing the boundary line and increase their estate. Wrath was in store for Judah. To Ephraim the Lord would be as a moth. To the house of Judah He would be as rottenness. The moth destroys. Both terms, moth and rottenness, are symbols of destroying influences working against the house of Israel and the house of Judah Isaiah 50:9; Isaiah 51:8; Psalms 39:11; Job 13:28. Then they turned to the Assyrian for help and to King Jareb. But there was no help. Jareb is not a proper name, it is an epithet applied to the king of Assyria and means “He will contend” or “He will plead the cause.” Like a lion would be the Lord to Israel, and like a young lion to Judah. The same symbolical language is used in Isaiah in connection with the Assyrian, the rod of God’s anger Isaiah 10:1-34. “Their roaring shall be like a lion, they shall roar like young lions; yea, they shall roar, and lay hold of the prey, and shall carry it away safe, and none shall deliver it” Isaiah 5:29. Thus judgment came upon them and they were carried away as a prey. And like the lion after his attack withdraws to his den, so the Lord would withdraw from them, leave them and return to His place, waiting till their repentance comes and they seek Him early in their affliction.

The last verse of this chapter has a wider meaning than the past judgment which came upon the house of Israel. The Lord of glory came to earth and visited His people. He came with the message and offer of the kingdom to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. He came unto His own, but His own received Him not. After they had rejected Him, delivered Him into the hands of the Gentiles to be crucified, He returned to His place. There He is now at the right hand of God, waiting for that day, when the remnant of Israel will repent and seek His face Acts 3:19-26. That will be in their coming great affliction, in the time of Jacob's trouble.

Hosea 6:1-3. The division of the chapter at this point is unfortunate. The three verses of chapter 6 must not be detached from the previous chapter. Here we have the future repentance of the remnant of Israel, that is during the great tribulation. Believingly they will acknowledge His righteous judgment and express their faith and hope in His mercy and the promised blessings and restoration. They express what their great prophet Moses so beautifully stated in His prophetic song, that great vision given to him, ere he went to the mountain to die. "See now that I, even I, am He and there is no god with Me; I kill, and I make alive; I wound, and I heal; neither is there any that can deliver out of My hand" Deuteronomy 32:39. "After two days will He revive us; on the third day He will raise us up, and we shall live in His sight (literally, before His face)." They have been dead spiritually and nationally, but when the two days of their blindness and dispersion are over, there is coming for them the third day of life and resurrection. Jewish expositors have pointed out the fact that a day is with the Lord as a thousand years. They state that they will be in dispersion for two days, that is, two thousand years, after which comes the third day of Israel's glorious restoration. One Rabbinical commentator says: "The first day we were without life in the Babylonian captivity, and the second day, which will also end, is the great captivity in which we are now, and the third day is the great day of our restoration." Like Jonah was given up by the fish on the third day, so comes for Israel a third day of life and glory. Then the latter and the former rain will fall upon their land again, and, blest by Him, their Saviour-King, they will live in His sight. But the passage, no doubt, also points to the resurrection of our Lord, the true Israel in a hidden way.

Chapter 6 (b)

Chapter 6:4-11

Divine Mourning over Ephraim and Judah

1. *What shall I do to thee?* (Hosea 6:4-6)

2. *Their transgression* (Hosea 6:7-11)

6:4-11. The Lord's reply

Hosea 6:4-6. The Lord grieves and mourns over the condition of the people whom He loves. After the brief glimpse given of their great future of glory we are brought back into the days of Moses. The Lord grieves and mourns over His people whom He loves, who today are still beloved for the Father's sake Romans 9:1-33. But while He loved them, their love was like the morning cloud, like the dew, vanishing soon away. The morning cloud looks beautiful, gilded by the rays of the rising sun, but it quickly disappears through the heat of the sun; the dew glitters in the early morning, but soon it is gone. Thus was their love, fluctuating and changing. How often is the love of His heavenly people like the morning cloud and the dew! Thank God that His love never changes! The Prophets He had sent to them came, therefore, with words of condemnation, instead of words of comfort and cheer. They came to hew, as stone or wood is hewn, and the message of judgment they proclaimed condemned them; this is the meaning of the sentence, "I have slain them by the words of My mouth."

Hosea 6:7-11. "Yet they like Adam have transgressed the covenant; they have dealt treacherously against Me." As God had made known His covenant to Adam, given him a commandment, so He had made a covenant with them and made known unto them His will. Like Adam they had transgressed the covenant. Adam had been called into relationship with His Creator and a place of blessing and favour in Eden had been given to him. He transgressed, and after his fall he was driven out. This happened to Israel. Called of God, who entered with them into a covenant and gave them the land of promise, but when they transgressed, like Adam, they were also driven out. Iniquity and blood was everywhere. Even the priests lurked as a band of robbers and murdered the travelers on the way to Shechem, one of the cities of refuge. (Note correct translation: "Upon the way they murder (those who go) to Shechem" Hosea 6:9.)

(Attention has been called to an important distinction. Man is called a sinner. The Gentiles as such are never called transgressors. We read in the New Testament of sinners of the Gentiles, but never "transgressors" of the Gentiles.

Adam was under a law, which he broke and by it he became a transgressor. Israel was under the law, which they broke and became transgressors. But no covenant existed with the Gentiles, nor had they the law given to them; hence while they are lost sinners, they are not called transgressors in the sense in which the covenant people are called transgressors.)

The horrible thing was that Israel was steeped in whoredoms; they were not only spiritually adulterers, but following the idol worship they lived in literal harlotry and lewdness. Judah, too, would get a harvest. But the final sentence of this chapter, “When I return the captivity of My people,” is a prophecy, not concerning the return from Babylon, but that other great restoration which is yet to come. Looked upon in this light the entire verse is prophetic. “For thee, also, Judah a harvest waits, when I shall turn the captivity of My people.” When God restores His people in His promised covenant mercies then Judah will be visited by judgment as it will be in the end of this age.

Chapter 7

7-13. The Lord’s indictment of Israel

The Moral Depravity of Israel

- 1. Their moral depravity (Hosea 7:1-7)*
- 2. Mingling with heathen nations (Hosea 7:8-16)*

7: 1-16. Her moral depravity

Hosea 7:1-7. All the gracious efforts of the Lord to heal Israel resulted in a greater manifestation of the iniquity of Ephraim. Instead of turning to Him in true repentance and self-judgment their evil heart turned away from Jehovah, and they continued in their downward course. They did not consider that the Lord would remember all their evil deeds and punish them for it. The king and the princes, the political heads were as corrupt as the priests, they were pleased with the impenitence and wickedness of their subjects. Then follows a graphic description of their moral depravity. They were adulterers, burning with lust, “like an oven heated by the baker, who rests, stirring up (the fire), after he has kneaded the dough until it be leavened.” They indulged in all the vile, obscene practices connected with the idol worship of the heathen about them. They were also drunkards and were heated with wine as they were with lust. They made their heart like an oven; their baker (meaning their own evil will and imagination) slept all night, but, awakening in the morning, their lust is stirred up again. Nor did anyone call upon the name of the Lord.

Such was the moral depravity of a people with whom the Lord had entered into covenant, the favored nation. The source of it was unbelief and the rejection of His Word. The sad history of Israel is repeated in professing Christendom today.

Hosea 7:8-16. The Lord called Israel to be a separated nation, but Ephraim mingled with the heathen (not, people) and is compared to a cake not turned. They adopted heathen ways, heathen manners and heathen vices. Like an unturned cake, which is black and burnt on the one side, while above it is unbaked, such was Ephraim's condition. Such a cake was fit for nothing; it had to be thrown away. The strangers with whom they mingled devoured their strength, nor did they not notice the signs of their speedy national decay. This is the meaning of the statement, "Gray hairs are here and there upon him, and he does not know it." Furthermore, Ephraim is likened to a silly dove without understanding. Instead of flying back to Jehovah their help and rest, they fluttered, like a moth around the flame, around Egypt and Assyria, trying to find deliverance there. But while fluttering from Egypt to Assyria and from Assyria to Egypt, they did not see the net which was spread for their destruction--that net was Assyria itself. In this net the Lord caught them; their freedom would be ended and captivity begin. Then follows the divine Woe. "Woe unto them! for they have wandered from Me. Destruction upon them, that they have transgressed against Me!" The divine lament cried after them, "I would have redeemed them, but they spoke lies against Me." While they may have cried with their mouth, their heart did not. They were like a deceitful bow on which the archer cannot depend, so the Lord could not depend upon Israel. God had, to apply the symbol, bent Israel as His own bow against evil and idolatry, but they turned themselves against Him.

Chapter 8

Chapters 8:1-9:9

The Apostasy is Followed by Judgment

- 1. The judgment announced (Hosea 8:1-7)*
- 2. The apostasy which resulted in judgment (Hosea 8:8-14)*
- 3. Warning against self-security (Hosea 9:1-9)*

Hosea 8:1-7. The prophet is commanded to sound the alarm of the impending judgment. The message is that the enemy will come swift as an eagle upon the house of the Lord, which here does not mean the temple (which was in connection with Judah), but Israel as the chosen people was the house, the

dwelling-place of the Lord. All their spurious profession, their false claim, “My God, we know Thee, we, Israel”, will go for nothing, because they transgressed the covenant and the law. The obnoxious thing they did is stated in Hosea 9:4. They had separated themselves from Judah and chosen their own kings and princes in self will, thus putting themselves outside of the theocracy; idolatry speedily followed. In Bethel they had erected the worship of the calf, the great abomination in the sight of the Lord. He rejects their corrupt worship, and ere long the calf of Samaria will be broken to pieces, like the golden calf their fathers made in the wilderness. They sowed the wind and the whirlwind would be the harvest (Hosea 10:13; Hosea 12:2; Job 4:8; Proverbs 22:8). They sowed vanity and evil; the tempest of destruction would be their reaping. What they sowed would not yield fruit at all. The Hebrew contains a play of words, “Tsemach brings no Quernach,” which may be rendered, “shoot brings no fruit.”

Hosea 8:8-14. Israel had been swallowed up by the nations, that is, by mingling with them. By their doings they have become like a despised vessel. Their sin was going up to Assyria, like a wild ass, suing there for love and favor. They were like a stubborn brute going there by itself. Ephraim was even worse than the stubborn ass. They formed unnatural alliances with the Gentiles. There they gave presents, hiring lovers, literally rendered, “Ephraim gave presents of love” to practice her whoredoms. They forgot their Creator, God; their sacrifices Jehovah despised. Therefore the judgment.

Hosea 9:1-9. Under the reign of Jeroboam II Israel enjoyed great prosperity. It seems they had a bountiful harvest, corn and wine was in abundance. They gave themselves over to feasting and rejoicing. It was at such an occasion when the Lord sent this warning against their own security. Their captivity is announced where they would eat things unclean and feast days will no longer be possible. Then the prophet beholds them as already in the Assyrian captivity. They went away and turned towards the south to escape the sure destruction. But “Egypt will gather them, Memphis will bury them.” Their precious things of silver will give way to thistles and thorns. The day of visitation was at hand; their iniquities are remembered and their sins will be visited.

Chapters 9-10

Chapters 9:10-11:11

Retrospect, Israel’s Failure and Ruin

1. Israel once beloved, now fugitive wanderers (Hosea 9:10-17)

2. Their guilt and punishment (Hosea 10:1-11)

3. *Exhortation and rebuke* (Hosea 10:12-15)

4. *The mercy of a merciful God* (Hosea 11:1-11)

9:10-11:11. Retrospect of the nation's sin and woe

Hosea 9:10-17. Like a wayfaring man who finds grapes and figs in the desert and delights in them, so the Lord found Israel in the desert and they were His pleasure when He led them out of Egypt. But they requited His love by going after Baal-peor, one of the filthiest gods of heathendom. To this they consecrated themselves and practiced their vile abominations. Therefore the glory which He had given to His people will fly away like a bird and their licentious worship of unnatural vices would avenge itself so that there would be no pregnancy and no birth, the promised increase would stop. It seems Hosea 9:14-17 are an outburst of the prophet. How literally the sentence has been fulfilled. "They will be wanderers."

Hosea 10:1-11. Here is another retrospect, Israel once called to be a thriving vine (not empty), called to be fruitful; but Israel did not bring forth the expected fruit. As the nation abounded and prospered they increased their idol altars; as the land yielded its increase in the same measure they made their images. Their heart was smooth, or deceitful, for this they will now have to suffer. "Their heart is smooth; now will they make expiation." They will have no more king. The smooth or deceitful heart is described in Hosea 10:4, while in the verse which follows the judgment upon their calves they worshipped is announced. It, the calf, will be carried to Assyria to be made a present of to the king. The high places will be destroyed and thorns and thistles will overgrow its altars. Then they will say to the mountains, "Cover us!" and to the hills, "Fall upon us!" Well, it is to read in connection with this prophetic statement what our Lord said about the judgment of Jerusalem in Luke 23:30 and what is written in connection with the breaking of the sixth seal in Revelation 6:16.

Gibeah is mentioned (Hosea 10:9). The corruption of Gibeah is also noted in Hosea 9:9. The horrible abomination of Gibeah is recorded in 19:1-30 in consequence of which the tribe of Benjamin was almost wiped out. And the people had become as wicked and guilty as Benjamin at Gibeah. The nations are now to be used to punish Israel. "And the nations will gather themselves against them, when I bind them for their offenses" (Hosea 10:10, literal translation) .

Hosea 10:12-15. Here is a break in the judgment message. If they would return to the Lord and would sow righteousness, they would reap mercy. But such sowing is impossible unless the fallow ground is broken up, that is, true

repentance and a heart return unto the Lord. “For it is time to seek the Lord, until He come and rain righteousness upon you.” In what infinite patience He waited for the repentance of His people! But while He would save them, they would not! Still God’s gifts and calling are without repentance and the day will come when a remnant of Israel will seek the Lord; then He will come and rain righteousness upon them.

How different was their condition! The Lord rebukes them, for they had ploughed wickedness, and reaped iniquity. The noise of war is now heard; Shalman (a contracted form of Shalmanezar, the King of Assyria) is advancing and shall destroy all their fortresses as he destroyed Beth-arbel. (There is no further record of Beth-arbel and its destruction.) And who was responsible for all this havoc and the impending calamity? “Thus has Bethel done to you, for the evil of your great evil. In the early morning the king of Israel shall be utterly cut off.” Bethel was the seat of Israel’s idolatry, it drew God’s wrath and finally ended the monarchy in Israel and their national existence.

Hosea 11:1-11. This chapter starts with a beautiful allusion to Israel’s youth, when in sovereign love He called Israel, His firstborn son, out of Egypt, redeeming them by blood and power Exodus 4:22-31. But this passage is quoted in the second chapter of the Gospel of Matthew: “That it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Out of Egypt have I called My Son” Matthew 2:15. The blending together of Israel and Christ is very interesting. Christ is the true Israel and goes through the entire history of the nation, without failure and in divine perfection. He was carried as an infant into the land where Israel suffered in the fiery furnace; and finally He died for that nation and in some future day through Him, the true Israel (called such in Isaiah 49:1-26), Israel’s great future and glory will come to pass.

But while the Son of God, the true Israel, was perfect and holy in all His ways, Israel was unfaithful. This record of Jehovah’s faithfulness and mercy is here unfolded. He sent them prophets who called them, but they turned away from Him and gave themselves over to the Baalim and the idol-gods. How loving He had been to them! He led them, took them into His arms and healed them. He drew them with cords of love and was towards them “as those that would raise the yoke-strap over their jaws, and I reached out to them to eat” (Hosea 11:4). It is a beautiful picture of His great gentleness with them. Perhaps some of them were anxious to turn to Egypt and find a home there and thus escape the cruel Assyrian. But the Lord declares that they shall not return to Egypt, but Assyria is to be their king, because they refused to return. The sword of judgment would do its work completely (Hosea 11:6-7). Then follows a most wonderful outburst of deepest sorrow over the stubborn nation:

How should I give you up, Ephraim?

How shall I surrender thee, Israel?

How should I make thee like Admah?

Or set thee like Zeboim?

My heart is turned within me;

My repentings are kindled together.

It is the same Lord who speaks here, who centuries later stood before the city and broke out in loud weeping when He beheld the city: “If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes” Luke 19:42. “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, ye shall not see Me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord” Matthew 23:37. How He loves His people! And though He has punished them, He does not forsake them; He will not be angry forever; He is a covenant keeping God, “For I am God and not man” (Hosea 11:9). “For I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed” Malachi 3:6. And so here, this chapter of Jehovah’s mercy ends with the assurance of their future restoration and blessing. “They will follow the Lord.” That will be “when like a lion He roars.” That is the day when He appears again as “The lion of the tribe of Judah.” Then, in that day, like a bird from Egypt they will hasten back and like a dove from Assyria. “Then will I make them dwell in their houses, saith the Lord.” Here is another prophecy of their restoration to their own, God-given home land.

Chapter 11-12

Chapters 11:12-12:14. Ephraim’s indictment

The Indictment

- 1. Ephraim’s indictment (Hosea 11:12; Hosea 12:1-2)*
- 2. Remembrance of the past (Hosea 12:3-6)*
- 3. What Israel had become (Hosea 12:7-14)*

Chapter 11:12-12:2. Lying and deceit had been Ephraim's course towards Jehovah; instead of trusting Him and following Him faithfully they had attached themselves to idols, while Judah still outwardly cleaved to Jehovah, though it was in a rambling way. The word translated "ruleth" means rambling. The better rendering of the sentence is "and Judah is also rambling towards God (or unbridled against Him) and towards the faithful Holy One." But while outwardly Judah seemed to be all right, Ephraim fed on wind, was occupied with the vain, the empty things, increased in lies and desolation and turned to Assyria and Egypt for help, sending as a present olive oil to the latter and making a covenant with the former (see 2 Kings 17:4). Then the mask is torn from Judah's face. The Lord had a controversy with them also and would repay them according to their evil deeds.

Hosea 12:3-6. Jacob's sons are now reminded of Jacob's experience. Though he was so weak and sinful yet the Lord in marvelous grace met him. The experience at Peniel is recalled. "Yea, he had power over the angel, and prevailed; he wept and made supplication unto Him." There he learned the sufficiency of grace and his strength was made perfect in weakness. The angel who appeared unto him that night was none other than the Son of God. What a reminder it was to them. "He found him (Jacob) in Bethel!" In the very place where the Lord found Jacob and Jacob found the Lord, they had set up their awful, God-denying idol worship. Where God had shown such mercy there they practiced now their abominations. Jehovah, the God of hosts, was still the same. He is the Lord who changes not. He was waiting still for their return. To such a God, who keeps His covenant promises they were urged to return and prove their true return by keeping mercy and justice and by waiting on Jehovah continually. But the call of grace and mercy was unheeded.

Hosea 12:7-14. The Lord calls apostate Israel a merchant, that is in Hebrew "Canaan." (Canaan means traffic; see Ezekiel 17:4.) They had become Canaanites with the balances of deceit, loving to oppress. They had become fraudulent merchants, by cheating and oppression. Their wrong attitude towards Jehovah, having forsaken Him, led to a wrong attitude towards their fellowmen. Instead of repenting they boasted, "I am become rich, I have found me out substance." They were breaking the law continually Leviticus 19:36 and Deuteronomy 25:13-16. Yet in all their lawbreaking they prided themselves of being a righteous nation. "In all my labors they shall find no iniquity in me that were sin." How all this fits a good part of the Jews today is too well known to need further comment.

Some day it will be different through the grace and mercy of the never-changing Lord. He is the Jehovah who delivered them out of Egypt; all their blessing and

prosperity they owed to Him; He had guided and preserved them, and all their sinning would not diminish His faithfulness to them. They are going to dwell again some day in tents, a reference to the feast of tabernacles, that great feast which typifies the coming millennial blessings for restored Israel. Such had been the continued testimony of the prophets He had sent, who announced the coming judgments and the final blessings in a future day. But now everything was ruin on account of their idolatry. Gilgal was the seat of a part of their idolatry (Hosea 4:15, 9:15). Then once more they are reminded of their progenitor Jacob. He fled before Esau his brother, yet though he was weak he served faithfully for a wife and for a wife he kept guard and Jehovah guarded and blest him. So He would concern Himself with them again. The twenty-sixth chapter of Deuteronomy throws light on this passage. But what was Ephraim's condition? Instead of acknowledging all Jehovah had done for Jacob and his offspring they provoked Him to bitter anger, therefore the Lord would punish them.

Chapter 13

Ephraim's Ruin and judgment

- 1. Ruin and judgment (Hosea 13:1-8)*
- 2. It is thy destruction, O Israel! (Hosea 13:9-11)*
- 3. Mercy to follow wrath (Hosea 13:12-14)*
- 4. The desolation of the nearing judgment (Hosea 13:15-16)*

Hosea 13:1-8. In the beginning Ephraim was humble, and knowing his dependence, he spoke with trembling. Then he became puffed up, exalted himself in Israel, loving the preeminence, it led on to the schism from Judah and the house of David. The next step after this separation from Judah was idolatry, then the dying of the nation began. This sad history of Ephraim, revealing the steps of decline, beginning with self-exaltation and ending in ruin and death, has often been repeated in the individual history of countless multitudes among the professing people of God.

Then they went from sinning to sinning, from bad to worse, just as in our own days, the apostates in Christendom go from bad to worse in fulfillment of 2 Timothy 3:13. "But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived." Idolatry flourished on all sides. They added idol images in Gilgal and Beer-sheba to the golden calves Amos 8:14. Then the judgment is announced. Just as the rising sun quickly disperses the morning clouds and the dew, so they should pass away (Hosea 6:4). They would be like the chaff driven

with a whirlwind out of the threshing floor Psalms 1:4; Psalms 35:5; Isaiah 17:13; Isaiah 41:15-29); they would be like the quickly evaporating smoke, which comes out of the windows of a house without a chimney.

Then the Lord reminds them of their former relationship and that He is the true God, “and there is no Saviour beside Me.” In the land of the wilderness He knew them and there He cared for them and provided all their needs. But instead of acknowledging Him, they became full; self-exaltation followed, and then they forgot Him. Throughout the Word of God self-exaltation, pride is always given as the starting point of departure from God and the consequent ruin.

Hosea 13:7-8 are interesting. They are to be rent by wild beasts, which, symbolically, represent the Gentiles. The ten tribes were carried away by the Assyrian, while later, when Judah met its judgment, the whole land was devastated by the lion-empire (Babylonia); by the bear (Medo-Persia); by the leopard (the Graeco-Macedonia); and finally by the dreadful beast, “the beast of the field shall tear them,” the Roman power.

Hosea 13:9-11. “It is thy destruction, O Israel, that thou art against Me, against thy help.” What they had done in lifting themselves up, in forsaking Jehovah was spiritual and national suicide. They were alone responsible for their destruction. Where was their king to save them out of such ruin and destruction? The house of David with which the covenant had been made they had forsaken. He reminds them again of an episode in their past history, when they, their fathers, were rebellious and asked for a king. Such kings like Saul had been their kings which reigned over the ten tribes.

13: 14-16. Israel’s future resurrection

Hosea 13:12-14. Ephraim deliberately held on to his sin. Their iniquity was bound up; it was laid by in store. The reference is to the oriental custom of tying up money and other valuables into a bundle and hiding it somewhere. It was done for security. So the Lord would see to it that their sins and iniquity would not be forgotten; all their sins were preserved for punishment (see Deuteronomy 32:34). Sorrow and great trouble should come upon them. It has been thus in the past, it will be so in the future, in the time of “Jacob’s trouble” Jeremiah 30:7. When that time comes, when all their hope and strength is gone Deuteronomy 32:36-52) then He will deliver. Then all the enemies will be put down. Redemption from death and the plagues will come; they will be ransomed from the power of Sheol (not hell). Israel will be raised from its national death-sleep. Long she has been buried among the nations, without spiritual and national life, like those who are in the power of Sheol. But Jehovah will deliver the faithful

portion of Israel and Judah, and they will rise from the dust of the earth, the symbol of their national restoration. To use this passage, as it has been done, to teach the restitution of the wicked, is wrong. It has nothing to do with the wicked dead and their future, but all applies to the restoration of Israel. (See the annotations of chapters 16 and 37 of the Prophet Ezekiel.)

Hosea 13:15-16. These verses describe the horrors of the coming judgment by the Assyrians 2 Kings 8:12; 2 Kings 15:16, and Amos 1:13).

Chapter 14

14. Kingdom restoration of Israel

The Return and the Glorious Redemption

1. The exhortation to return (Hosea 14:1-3)

2. The glorious redemption (Hosea 14:4-9)

Verses 1-3. Call to return

Hosea 14:1-3. This chapter is a wonderful finale to the messages of Hosea. What tender entreaties! What gracious assurance! What glorious promises of a future redemption! it is Jehovah beseeching His people, those who had forsaken Him, outraged His character of holiness and who had despised Him. First is the call to return. God's hands are tied as long as His people stay away from Him and do not return to Him in true repentance. No true salvation and deliverance for His people is possible without a true heart return unto Him. It is this for which He looks and waits.

Then the Lord Himself puts His word and a prayer into their mouth. He loves to provide all. "Take with you words and turn to Jehovah and say unto Him, Forgive all iniquity, and receive us graciously, so will we render the calves of our lips." Could their poor, darkened and mistrusting hearts ever even have imagined to ask thus of Him? Their consciences were defiled; the burden of guilt was upon them. But Jehovah does not mention their sins and their guilt, but tells them just to pray for forgiveness and for a gracious reception. And He who tells His wayward people to pray, to turn to Him, to pray for forgiveness, He who assures them that He hears, assures them of a gracious receiving, will never fail. How full of comfort these sentences are to all His people at all times! We can imagine that in Hosea's day there were individual Israelites who took these words to heart. After them generations of Jews read them and turned individually to the Lord, found forgiveness and became the objects of His grace.

And we too, as His people, when we have gone back in our spiritual life, can find our comfort here, and appropriate all this in faith as we act upon His Word. In the future the remnant of Israel will take these gracious exhortations to heart, and before the glorious redemption is given to them return to the Lord with this prayer.

“So will we render the calves of our lips.” Literally rendered it is “we will pay as young oxen our lips,” i.e., present the prayers of our lips as a thank offering; we will be worshippers. Such is the result of a real return unto the Lord with sins forgiven and restored to His fellowship. The days of singing are coming for Israel in that day when they return unto Him and He appears in His glory to be enthroned as King. It will usher in the singing times for all the world, including groaning creation, then delivered. Then follows the evidence of their genuine repentance. It is expressed in words suited to the condition of Ephraim in Hosea’s day. They repudiate Assyria; they acknowledge that no salvation is there, but only in Jehovah. No longer will they trust in their own strength and in the strength of their horses; no longer will they turn to idols and call them “Our God,” but they will acknowledge Him in whom the fatherless findeth mercy. Israel, God’s firstborn son, had been the prodigal, was fatherless, though the Father’s love never gave them up. But now the prodigal returns and knows there is One in whom the fatherless findeth abundant mercy. All this true repentance will be manifested at the close of this age, when the remnant of Israel turns to the Lord.

Verses 4-8. The Lord’s gracious response

Hosea 14:4-9. His gracious answer to such repentance follows. Three times Jehovah speaks “I will.” This is the word of sovereign grace. (See annotations on Ezekiel.) The three “I wills” are: (1) I will heal their backslidings; (2) I will love them freely; (3) I will be a dew unto Israel. They are arranged in a most blessed order. Mercy, love and gracious refreshment resulting in fruitfulness and beauty, such is the order. The past is wiped out, the present is love and the future is glory. Like the lily, like Lebanon and like the olive-tree, Israel is to be. The lily denotes beauty; they will be clad in the beauty of holiness. Lebanon stands for strength and stability; they will become the nation of power which can never be moved. Then they shall be once more the olive tree; the broken off branches will be put back Romans 11:16, etc.). The blessings of the restored Israel in the millennium are given in the seventh verse.

Verse 9. Concluding statement

Beautiful is Hosea 14:8. “Ephraim (shall say), ‘What have I to do any more with idols? I hear and I look upon Him; I am like a green fir tree. From Me is thy fruit found.’” “Ephraim, the cake half turned, Ephraim, of whom it was said, he is joined to idols, leave him alone, now repudiates the idols. And why? I hear and I look upon Him! The vision of the Lord turned the stubborn heart. It is so still; the great power is to hear Him, to look upon Him. In that day Israel will look on Him whom they pierced, the great turning point in their future history. Then the nation will yield the fruit through their fellowship with Him. Blessed ending of this prophecy. “For the ways of Jehovah are right, and the just shall walk in them; but the transgressors shall fall therein.”

Hosea Prophecies

This book stands first in order among the “Minor Prophets.” “The probable cause of the location of Hosea may be the thoroughly national character of his oracles, their length, their earnest tone, and vivid representations.”

This was the longest of the prophetic books written before the Captivity.

Hosea prophesied in a dark and melancholy period of Israel’s history, the period of Israel’s decline and fall. Their sins had brought upon them great national disasters. “Their homicides and fornication, their perjury and theft, their idolatry and impiety, are censured and satirized with a faithful severity.”

He was a contemporary of Isaiah.

The book may be divided into two parts, the first containing chapters 1-3, and symbolically representing the idolatry of Israel under imagery borrowed from the matrimonial relation. The figures of marriage and adultery are common in the Old Testament writings to represent the spiritual relations between Jehovah and the people of Israel. Here we see the apostasy of Israel and their punishment, with their future repentance, forgiveness, and restoration.

The second part, containing 4-14, is a summary of Hosea’s discourses, filled with denunciations, threatenings, exhortations, promises, and revelations of mercy.

Quotations from Hosea are found in Matt. 2:15; 9:15; 12:7; Rom. 9:25-26. There are, in addition, various allusions to it in other places (Luke 23:30; Rev. 6:16, compare Hos. 10:8; Rom. 9:25-26; 1 Pet. 2:10, compare Hos. 1:10, etc.).

As regards the style of this writer, it has been said that “each verse forms a whole for itself, like one heavy toll in a funeral knell.” “Inversions (7:8; 9:11, 13; 12:8), anacolutha (9:6; 12:8, etc.), ellipses (9:4; 13:9, etc.), paranomasias, and plays upon words, are very characteristic of Hosea (8:7; 9:15; 10:5; 11:5; 12:11).”



The plain of Jezreel – site of Armageddon (Joel 2)

Commentary on the Book of Joel

Introduction

Joel means “Jehovah is God.” This name occurs frequently in the Old Testament (1 Samuel 8:22; 1 Chronicles 4:35; 1 Chronicles 5:4; 1 Chronicles 5:8; 1 Chronicles 5:12, etc.). The prophet Joel was the son of Pethuel. Numerous guesses have been made about his personality. A tradition states that he was from Bethom in the tribe of Reuben. In 1 Chronicles 24:16 a man by name of Pethahiah is mentioned. Some have connected him with the father of Joel, Pethuel, claiming upon this that Joel belonged to a priestly family; but this, as well as other claims cannot be confirmed. Jewish expositors make the statement that Pethuel was Samuel, because Samuel had a son by name of Joel; but,

inasmuch as the sons of Samuel were evildoers this is incorrect. The book itself does not give even a single hint as to his personal history.

When and Where Joel Lived

As to the time and place, when and where he exercised his prophetic office, we are not left in doubt. He prophesied not like Hosea among the ten tribes, but he was a prophet of Judah. The entire prophecy bears witness to it; this fact has never been disputed. It is different with the date of Joel. Destructive criticism has assigned to Joel a post-exilic date, with some very puerile arguments. For instance the claim that the mention of the walls of Jerusalem (Joel 2:7; Joel 2:9), point to a date after Ezra and Nehemiah. Such an argument is not an argument of a scholar but of school-boy. Critics also object to an early date because the Greeks are mentioned in Joel 3:6. But the Greeks are also mentioned in an inscription of Sargon (about 710 B.C.), and long before that in the Armana letters a Greek is also mentioned, as stated in "Higher Criticism and the Monuments" by Professor Sayce.

The best Jewish and Christian scholarship has maintained a very early date of Joel. When the editor published his larger work on Joel, in which he puts the date between 860 and 850 B.C., Professor H.A. Sayce of Oxford, one of the greatest scholars of our times, wrote in a personal letter to the writer: "Let me thank you heartily for your very interesting exposition of Joel. I am glad to see a work of the kind on conservative lines; the attempts to find a late date for the prophet rests on arguments which to the inductive scientist are no arguments at all." This strong statement and endorsement of a very early date for Joel certainly outweighs the arguments of certain critics who possess nothing like the scholarship of the Oxford professor.

There is nothing mentioned in Joel of the Assyrian period 800-650, nor is there anything said of the Babylonian period 650-538, hence Joel must have prophesied before the Assyrian period, that is in the ninth century B.C., or he must have lived after the exile. The latter is excluded, therefore Joel exercised his office as prophet in Judah during the middle of the ninth century, as stated above, about 860-850 B.C. This view is abundantly verified by different facts found in the book itself.

Now, the date of Amos is generally accepted as being in the middle of the 8th century before Christ. In the first chapter of the book of Amos there is an undoubted quotation from the book of Joel. (See Joel 3:16 and Amos 1:2). Dr. Pusey makes the following argument out of this fact:

“Amos quoting Joel attests two things. (1) That Joel’s prophecy must, at the time when Amos wrote, have become a part of Holy Scriptures, and its authority must have been acknowledged; (2) That its authority must have been acknowledged by, and it must have been in circulation among, those to whom Amos prophesied; other-wise he would not have prefixed to his book those words of Joel. For the whole force of the words, as employed by Amos, depends on being recognized by his hearers, as a renewal of the prophecy of Joel. Certainly bad men jeered at Amos, as though this threatening would not be fulfilled.”

The seven strongest reasons for the early date of Joel are the following:

1. Joel charges the Philistines with having invaded Judah, captured the inhabitants, and sold them as slaves. Now, according to 2 Chronicles 21:16, this happened under Joram, B.C. 889-883. And they suffered the punishment predicted for their crime, under Uzziah, 2 Chronicles 26:6. Hence Joel could not have written this book before B.C. 889, nor later than 732.
2. The Phoenicians, i.e., those of Tyre and Sidon, who in the days of David and Solomon were the allies, had in later times become the enemies of Judah. They too had been guilty of selling Jewish prisoners to the Grecians. Joel predicts that they also shall be punished for this crime--a prediction fulfilled in the time of Uzziah, B.C. 811-759. This proves that Joel must have prophesied before the days of Uzziah.
3. The Edomites (Joel 3:19), are ranked among the enemies of Judah. They came from the same stock as the Jews, and on account of their sin against their brethren, their country was to become a perpetual desolation. From 2 Kings 8:20, comp. with 2 Chronicles 21:8, we learn that they became independent of Judah in the time of Joram, B.C. 889-883. They were again subdued, and their capital city Petra captured, B.C. 838-811, though the southern and eastern parts of their territory were not conquered until the reign of Uzziah, about B.C. 830. The prophet must have exercised his ministry, therefore, prior to the latter date.
4. The fact that no mention is made of the invasion by the Syrians of Damascus proves that Joel was one of the early prophets. This occurred in the latter part of the reign of Josiah, B.C. 850-840.
5. The high antiquity of Joel is proved by the fact that he makes no reference to the Assyrian invasion of the two Jewish kingdoms in B.C. 790. On the other hand, Amos clearly alludes to it (Amos 6:14).

6. Another proof is derived from the relation between Joel and Amos. The latter was certainly well acquainted with the writings of the former.

7. The mention of the Valley of Jehoshaphat is a circumstance leading to the same conclusion. It took this name from the memorable victory there gained over Moab and Ammon. The way in which Joel refers to it shows that this event must have been a comparatively recent one, and that the memory of it was still fresh.

On these grounds we conclude that in fixing the time of this prophet, we cannot take for our terminus a quo an earlier date than B.C. 890, nor for our terminus ad quem a later one than 840. It most probably falls between B.C. 860-850. Joel therefore is probably the oldest of the Minor Prophets.

The Prophecy of Joel

The prophecy of Joel is one which extends from his own time to the time of Israel's restoration and blessing in the day of the Lord. The style of the brief prophecy is sublime. To show its beauty we give a corrected metric version. It must be read through several times to grasp its vivid descriptions, the terse and solemn utterances, the full, smooth phrases, and above all the revelation it contains. His utterances are distinguished by the soaring flight of imagination, the originality, beauty and variety of the similes. The conceptions are simple enough, but they are at the same time bold and grand. The perfect order in which they are arranged, the even flow, the well compacted structure of the prophecy are all remarkable.

He may well be called "The Prophet of the Lord's Day." Five times he mentions this day. Joel 1:15; Joel 2:1-2; Joel 2:10-11; Joel 2:30-31; and Joel 3:14-16. The great theme then is "The Day of the Lord," that coming day, when the Lord is manifested, when the enemies of Israel are judged, when the Lord restores and redeems Israel.

The occasion of the book and prophecy of Joel was a dreadful scourge which swept over the land of Israel. Locusts swarms had fallen upon the land and stripped it of everything green. There was also a great drought. All was a chastisement from the Lord. Hence we see in the first chapter the penitential lamentations of old and young, priests and people. Then the vision widens in the second chapter. The locusts appear no longer as a scourge of literal insects; they become typical of an invading army. This hostile army invades the land from the North and makes the land a wilderness. The alarm is sounded in Zion; the repentance of the people follows. Then comes the great change in this picture of

desolation and despair. The day of the Lord is announced. He acts in behalf of His people. He delivers them from the northern Army; He restores what the locusts had devoured; the land is restored and the latter rain is given. At the close of the second chapter stands the prophecy which predicts spiritual blessings through the outpouring of the Spirit of God upon all flesh, a prophecy which has not yet been completely fulfilled, which is not now in process of fulfillment, but which will be accomplished in the day of the Lord. The last chapter is the great finale of this symphony of prophecy. Here the judgment of the nations is vividly portrayed; what the day of the Lord will bring, and what will follow in blessing is the final theme.

But few Christians have ever given much heed to this prophetic book. There are many important truths in this book. A great deal of confusion might have been avoided if more attention had been given to the setting in which the prediction of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon all flesh is found. The Pentecostal delusion is built up mostly upon the wrong interpretations of this prophecy.

The Division of Joel

The divisions of the prophecy of Joel, as found in our English version, cannot be improved upon. We follow it in our analysis and annotations.

Book of Joel

A Metric Version

Chapter 1

1. The Word of Jehovah which came to Joel, the Son of Pethuel.
2. Hear this, ye aged men
And open the ear ye inhabitants of the land!
Hath this happened in your days,
Or even in the days of your fathers?
3. Relate it to your children
And your children to their children,
And their children to another generation.
4. What the Gazam*1 left, the Arbeh hath devoured
And what the Arbeh left, the Jelek hath devoured
And what the Jelek left, the Chasel hath devoured
5. Awake, ye drunkards and weep!
And howl all ye drinkers of wine
Because of the sweet wine,
For it is taken away from your mouth.

6. For a nation has come up upon my land
 Mighty and without number-- His teeth--lion's teeth--
 The jaw teeth, that of a lioness.
 7. He hath made my vine for a desolation
 And my fig tree broken off;
 Peeled off completely and cast it away;
 Its branches are made white.
 8. Lament like a virgin!
 Girded with sackcloth for the husband of her youth.
 9. Cut off is the meat and drink offering from the house of Jehovah.
 10. "Wasted is the field
 Mourning is the land--For wasted is the corn
 The new wine is dried up The oil faileth."
 11. Be ashamed, husbandman!
 Howl--vine dressers!
 For the wheat and the barley.
 Because the harvest of the field is lost.
 12. The vine is dried up
 And the fig tree faileth
 The pomegranate, also the palm and the apple tree.
 All the trees of the field are withered.
 Gone is joy from the children of men.
 13. Gird yourselves and lament, O ye priests,
 Howl, ministers of the altar;
 Come lie down in sackcloth all night
 Ye ministers of my God.
 For withholden from the house of your God
 Are the meat offering and the drink offering.
 14. Sanctify a fast.
 Call a solemn gathering.
 Bring together the Elders
 All the inhabitants of the land
 In the house of Jehovah your God
 And cry unto Jehovah
 15. Woe! For the Day!
 Because near is the day of Jehovah
 Even like destruction from Shaddai*2 it comes.
 16. Is not the food cut off before our eyes?
 From the house of our God joy and gladness.
 17. The seeds have perished under their clods.
 The garners become desolate
 The storehouses are broken down

For withered is the corn.
 18. Hear the cattle groan!
 The herds of cattle are bewildered,
 For there is no feeding place for them.
 Also the flocks of sheep are made to suffer*3
 19. To Thee, Jehovah, I cry,
 For the fire has consumed the goodly places of the desert
 And a flame hath burned all the trees of the field.
 20. Also the cattle of the field look Up*4 unto Thee
 For the streams of water are dried up,
 And a fire hath consumed the goodly places of the desert.

(*1 We leave these four words untranslated for reasons which will be given in the exposition.)

(*2 The only time Shaddai (Almighty) is used in Joel. In the Hebrew there is a resemblance of sound between “destruction” and “Shaddai.”)

(*3 The Hebrew word, which we translate “made to suffer” means in its root “to be guilty.”)

(*4 Another word different from the 19th verse is used, though nearly all translators use “cry.” it is more a groaning, desirous looking up.)

Chapter 2

1. Blow the trumpet in Zion,
 Sound an alarm in the mount of my holiness.
 Let all the dwellers of the land tremble,
 For the day of Jehovah cometh,
 For it is near at hand.
 2. A day of darkness and gloom
 A day of clouds and thick darkness,
 Like the dawn spread upon the mountains; --
 A people numerous and strong!
 Never hath there been the like before,
 Neither shall the like come again,
 in the years of many generations.
 3. A fire devoureth before them,
 And behind them a flame burneth;
 Before them the land is as the garden of Eden,
 And behind them a desolate wilderness,
 Yea, and nothing can escape them.
 4. Their appearance is like the appearance of horses,
 And like the horsemen shall they run.

5. Like the noise of chariots,
 On the mountain tops, they shall leap,
 Like the crackling of a flame of fire devouring the stubble,
 Like a strong people set in battle array
 6. Before them the peoples are in distress
 All faces turn to paleness.
 7. They run like mighty men
 They climb the wall like men of war;
 And they march each one in his ways,
 And they turn not aside from their ranks.
 8. Nor cloth one press upon another
 A mighty one*5 marches in the high road.
 They fall upon the dart, but are not wounded.
 9. They spread themselves in the city.
 They run along upon the wall,
 They climb up into the houses,
 They enter in by the windows like a thief
 10. The earth trembleth before them,
 The heavens shake,
 The sun and the moon are darkened,
 And the stars withdraw their shining.
 11. And Jehovah uttereth His voice before his army
 For very great is His host,
 For He that executeth His Word is mighty;
 For great is the day of Jehovah and very terrible,
 And who can stand it?
 12. Yet even now, saith Jehovah,
 Return unto Me with all your heart,
 With fasting and with weeping and with mourning.
 13. And rend your heart and not your garments,
 And return unto Jehovah your God,
 For He is gracious and merciful,
 Slow to anger and of great loving kindness
 And repenteth Him of the evil.
 14. Who knoweth He may return and repent
 And leave a blessing behind,
 An oblation and a drink offering
 For Jehovah your God.
 15. Blow the trumpet in Zion, Sanctify a fast.
 16. Call out a solemn assembly,
 Gather the people.
 Sanctify a congregation.

Assemble the old men.
 Gather the children,
 And those that suck the breasts;
 Let the bridegroom leave his chamber
 And the bride her closet;
 17. Let the priests, the ministers of Jehovah,
 Weep between the porch and the altar,
 And let them say:--
 "Spare Thy people, O Jehovah,
 And give not Thine heritage to reproach
 That the nations should rule over them.*6
 Wherefore should they say among the peoples
 "Where is their God?"
 18. Then Jehovah will be jealous for His people:
 And will have pity on His people.
 19. And Jehovah will answer and say to His people:
 Behold I am sending to you the corn,
 The new wine and the oil;
 And ye shall be satisfied therewith.
 And I will no longer make you
 For a reproach among the nations
 20. And I will remove afar from you the one from the North
 And will drive him into a dry and desolate land,
 His face toward the Eastern sea
 His rear toward the Western sea
 And his stench shall arise
 And his ill odor shall ascend,
 For he hath lifted himself up to do great things.
 21. Fear not, O Land
 Be glad and rejoice,
 For Jehovah doeth great things.
 22. Fear not, ye beasts of the field!
 For the pastures of the desert spring forth,
 The tree beareth her fruit
 The fig tree and the vine give their strength.
 23. Ye children of Zion, be glad and rejoice
 In Jehovah your God;
 For He giveth you the early rain in righteousness,
 He causeth to descend for you the showers,
 The early and the latter rain as before.
 24. And the floors shall be full of corn,
 And the vats shall overflow with new wine and oil.

25. And I will restore to you the years,
 Which the Arbeh hath eaten.
 The Jelek, the Chasel and the Gazam,
 My great army, which I sent among you.
 26. Then ye shall be in abundance, and be satisfied
 And praise the name of Jehovah your God,
 Who has dealt wondrously with you,
 You My people shall never be ashamed.
 27. And ye shall know that I am in the midst of Israel,
 And that I Jehovah am your God, and none else.
 And My people shall never be ashamed,
 28. And it shall come to pass afterwards,
 I will pour out My Spirit upon all flesh,
 And your sons and your daughters shall prophesy;
 Your old men shall dream dreams,
 Your young men shall see visions.
 29. Yea, even upon the men servants and the maid servants,
 In those days will I pour out My Spirit.
 30. And I will give wonders in the heaven and on earth,
 Blood, and fire and pillars of smoke.
 31. The sun shall be turned to darkness,
 And the moon into blood,
 Before the great and terrible day of Jehovah come.
 32. And it shall come to pass
 Whosoever shall call on the name of Jehovah shall be saved.
 For in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance,
 As Jehovah hath said,
 Even for the remnant whom Jehovah shall call.

(*5 This is the literal meaning.)

(*6 Or, “they that should be a byword of the nations.”)

Chapter 3

1. For behold in those days and in that time,
 When I shall bring back the captivity of Judah and Jerusalem;
 2. I will also bring together all nations,
 And will bring down into the valley of Jehoshaphat;
 And there will I judge them on account of My people,
 And My heritage Israel, whom they have scattered among the
 nations,
 And they divided My land.
 3. And they cast lots for My people,

They gave a boy for a harlot,
 And sold a girl for wine, and drank it.
 4. Yea also, what have ye to do with Me, O Tyre and Sidon,
 And all the borders of Philistia?
 Would you requite Me with retaliation?
 If you retaliate
 Swiftly and speedily will I bring your recompense
 Upon your own head.
 5. Because ye have taken My silver and gold,
 And have brought into your temples My very best things
 6. And the children of Judah and of Jerusalem,
 Ye sold to the children of the Greeks,
 That ye might remove them far from their border.
 7. Behold I will raise them up out of the place whither ye sold them,
 And I will return the retaliation upon your own head.
 8. And I will sell your sons and your daughters
 Into the hands of the sons of Judah.
 And they shall sell them to the Sabeans to a far off nation.
 For Jehovah hath spoken it.
 9. Proclaim this among the nations:
 Declare a war!
 Arouse the mighty ones!
 Let all the men of war draw near, let them come up!
 10. Beat your ploughshares into swords,
 And your pruning hooks into spears.
 Let the weak say, I am strong.
 11. Come together,
 All ye nations round about
 Gather yourselves together.
 Thither cause thy mighty ones to come down,
 O, Jehovah!
 12. Let the nations arise and come up
 To the valley of Jehoshaphat,
 For there will I sit to judge all the nations round about.
 13. Put in the sickle,
 For the harvest is ripe;
 Come--Tread!
 For the wine-press is full,
 The vats overflow;
 For their wickedness is great.
 14. Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision!
 For the day of Jehovah is at hand in the valley of decision.

15. The sun and the moon are darkened
And the stars withdraw their shining.
16. And Jehovah shall roar from Zion,
And send forth His voice from Jerusalem;
And the heavens and the earth shall shake;
But Jehovah will be a refuge for His people
And a fortress for the sons of Israel.
17. And ye shall know that I, Jehovah, your God,
Dwell in Zion, My holy mountain;
And Jerusalem shall be holy,
And strangers shall no more pass through her.
18. And it shall come to pass in that day
That the mountains shall drop down new wine,
And the hills shall flow with milk,
And all the river beds of Judah shall be full with waters,
And a fountain shall come forth from the house of Jehovah,
And shall water the valley of Shittim.
19. Egypt shall be a desolation
And Edom shall be a desolate wilderness.
For their violence against the children of Judah,
Because they shed innocent blood in their land.
20. But Judah shall abide forever.
And Jerusalem from generation to generation.
21. And I will purge them from the blood
From which I had not purged them
And Jehovah will dwell in Zion.

I. THE PLAGUE OF LOCUSTS

II. THE COMING DAY OF THE LORD: THE RUIN, THE REPENTANCE AND THE RESTORATION

III. THE EVENTS OF THE DAY OF THE LORD: ISRAEL'S ENEMIES JUDGED AND THE KINGDOM ESTABLISHED

I. THE PLAGUE OF LOCUSTS

Chapter 1

1. The locust plague – the Day of the Lord

- 1. The prophet's appeal (Joel 1:1-4)*
- 2. The call to the drunkards (Joel 1:5-7)*
- 3. The call to the people and the priests (Joel 1:8-14)*
- 4. The day of the Lord and the suffering land (Joel 1:15-18)*
- 5. The prayer of the prophet (Joel 1:19-20)*

Verses 1-7. The desolation of the land

Joel 1:1-4. The prophet announces that it is the Word of Jehovah he utters, which came to him. (Joel 1:2 and Joel 1:3 are an introduction to the description which follows the great calamity which had befallen the land. It is in the form of an appeal. What had happened to the land is of such a fearful character that it is unprecedented. The visitation of the land by the locust plague is to be related to future generations, because there is a great prophetic meaning as to the future attached to the locusts, which will be pointed out later. The fourth verse (Joel 1:4) we render in a way our own, leaving the words of the destroying insects untranslated.

What the Gazam left, the Arbeh hath devoured;

And what the Arbeh left, the Jelek hath devoured;

And what the Jelek left, the Chasel hath devoured.

We left the Hebrew words untranslated because they do not express insects of different species; they are one insect, the locust, in a fourfold stage. Gazam

means “to gnaw off,” Arbeh is “to be many”; this is the common name of the locusts on account of their migratory habits. Jelek is “to lick off,” and Chasel means “to devour or consume.” The locust passes through a fourfold stage in its development to full growth. First, it is the gnawing locust, when first hatched; then it gets its wings and flies about; after that it starts in its destructive work by licking off whatever it finds, and, finally, it reaches its full growth and devours everything in its path. (Many foolish applications have been made of these locusts. one of the most ridiculous is the one made by a certain woman-healer in her book *Lost and Restored*.)

The locust plague which laid Israel’s land bare was a judgment from the Lord. It was one of the judgments the Lord sent upon Egypt, and Moses had prophetically announced that the Lord would use them to punish his people (see Deuteronomy 28:38; Deuteronomy 28:42) .

But these literal locusts, which fell literally upon the land and destroyed in a short time all vegetation, are symbolic of other agencies which were to be used later in Israel’s history to bring judgment upon the land and the people. They are typical of Gentile armies, as stated in the second chapter, where the Lord calls them “My great army.” Here is unquestionably a prophetic forecast as to the future of the land. From Daniel’s prophecy we learn twice that four world powers should subjugate Israel and prey upon the land: Babylonia, Medo-Persia, Graeco-Macedonia and Rome. Zechariah, also, in one of his night visions, beheld four horns, and these four horns scattered Judah and Jerusalem. We see, therefore, in the locusts, first, the literal locusts which destroyed everything in vegetation at the time Joel lived, and these locusts are symbolical of future judgments executed upon the land and the nations by the prophetically announced world powers. At the close of the “times of the Gentiles,” during which Jerusalem is trodden down, the final invasion of the land takes place; it is this which is described in the second chapter.

Joel 1:5-7. The first swarm had probably appeared in the fall; only the vineyards had not yet been harvested. They attacked the vineyards and speedily the vines and the grapes disappeared under the onslaught. The drinkers of wine were therefore to suffer first. That there was much drunkenness among the people Israel, especially in the days of their prosperity, may be learned from Amos 6:1-6; Isaiah 5:11; Isaiah 24:7-23; Isaiah 28:7, etc. In Joel 1:6 the locusts are described as a nation, mighty without number, with lion’s teeth. This confirms the typical application to Gentile nations of the future who would devastate the land. See, furthermore, Numbers 13:33, Isaiah 40:22 and Jeremiah 51:14, where the same comparison is made.

Verses 8-13. Appeal to lament the plague

Verse 14. Call to self-humiliation and repentance

Joel 1:8-14. On account of the great disaster the people are called to mourn and put on sackcloth. “Lament like a virgin, girded with sackcloth, for the husband of her youth.” This is a significant expression. Israel in her relationship to Jehovah is here indicated. We are reminded of Isaiah 3:26 concerning Jerusalem, “And her gates shall lament and mourn, and she, being desolate, shall sit on the ground; ” and Isaiah 54:6, “For the Lord hath called thee as a woman forsaken and grieved in spirit, and a wife of youth, when thou wast refused, saith thy God.” So great was the havoc wrought that the meal and drink offering was cut off from the house of the Lord so that the priests mourned, the servants of Jehovah. This is their mournful chant:

Wasted is the field,

Mourning is the land,

For wasted is the corn,

The new vine is dried up,

The oil faileth.

This is followed by the call to lament for the husbandman and vinedressers. The whole harvest was gone, and besides the failure of the vine, the fig tree, the other trees are also mentioned, yea, “all the trees of the field are withered.” On account of the severity of this visitation joy had left the children of men.

Then comes the definite call to the priests to lament and cry unto Jehovah and to sanctify a fast (Joel 1:13-14). But there is no record of a response. At the close of this chapter the Prophet alone raises his voice to Jehovah. We shall learn in the second chapter of the time of the national repentance of Israel.

Verses 15-20. The plague a prophetic symbol of the Day of the Lord

Joel 1:15-18. For the first time we meet the day of the Lord (Yom Jehovah), that phrase used so frequently in all the prophetic books. The 15th verse (Joel 1:15) is an exclamation of the Prophet as before his vision that day appears. In the midst of the weird description of the calamity, present in Joel’s day, he beholds a greater judgment approaching. It is the same day he beholds which the other prophets mention; each time Joel uses this expression it means the coming day

of the Lord, still approaching. It may be noticed that the five passages in Joel in which “the day of the Lord” is mentioned are progressive.

For a comparative study of this important phrase we quote the leading passage of the different prophets.

Isaiah. The phrase “in that day” is found many times in his book. We mention Isaiah 2:2-5; Isaiah 2:10-22; Isaiah 4:1-6; Isaiah 13:6-13. The great glory predictions of Isaiah 54:1-17; Isaiah 60:1-22; Isaiah 61:1-11; Isaiah 62:1-12 are all related to this day.

Jeremiah. He also speaks of that day (Jeremiah 25:30-33; Jeremiah 30:18-24) .

Ezekiel. Chapters 7 and 8. From chapters 37-38 we have the record of great events both of judgment and blessing which will come to pass in connection with that day. While Daniel does not use in his book the phrase “day of the Lord” nearly all his great prophecies are connected with that day. It is the day in which the stone smites the great image, representing the times of the Gentiles, and demolishes it; the day on which “the Son of Man” comes in the clouds of heaven to receive the kingdom. Hosea points to that day in chapters 2 and 3, as well as in the closing chapter. Amos witnesses to it in Amos 1:2; Amos 6:3; Amos 9:2; Amos 9:15. Obadiah, who lived about the same time as Joel, speaks of the day in Obadiah 1:15 of his brief prophecy. Micah in his prophecy refers to it in Micah 5:15. In Nahum the day is described in which the Lord will deal in judgment with the wicked world cities (see Nahum 1:1-9). The third chapter of Habakkuk reveals that day. Zephaniah has a great deal more to say about that day than the preceding prophetic books (Zephaniah 1:14-18; Zep_2:1-15; Zep_3:1-20). Haggai bears witness to it in Haggai 2:6-7. (Compare with Hebrews 12:26-29.) Zechariah uses the phrase “in that day” many times, especially in the last three chapters. Malachi reveals the day in Malachi 3:1-3; and Malachi 4:1-3).

We learn from all this what a prominent place the day of the Lord occupies in the prophecies. It must be so, for it is the day of manifestation and consummation. Joel beheld here for the first time this day.

Then follows an additional description of the great calamity which had come upon the land in Joel’s day ((Joel 1:16-18).

Joel 1:19-20. Joel was, like all the other prophets, a man of prayer. No other mention is made by the prophet concerning himself, but this brief word is sufficient to give us a glimpse of his inner life and his trust in the Lord. He cried to Jehovah in the great distress.

II. THE COMING DAY OF THE LORD: THE REPENTANCE AND RESTORATION OF ISRAEL

Chapter 2

2. Events of the Day of the Lord

- 1. The alarm sounded and the day at hand (Joel 2:1-2)*
- 2. The invading army from the north (Joel 2:3-11)*
- 3. The repentance of the people and cry for help (Joel 2:12-17)*
- 4. "Then." The great change (Joel 2:18)*
- 5. Promises of restoration, and the early and latter rain (Joel 2:19-27)*
- 6. The outpouring of the Spirit upon all flesh (Joel 2:28-31)*
- 7. Deliverance in Mount Zion and Jerusalem (Joel 2:32)*

Verses 1-10. The invading army from the north

Joel 2:1-2. With this chapter we reach the heart of the prophecy of Joel. The description of the literal locust plague is now no longer continued. As we have shown the literal locusts in their different stages were symbolical of nations laying waste the land as the locusts had done. Dispensationally the first chapter stands for the entire times of the Gentiles, which began with Nebuchadnezzar Daniel 2:36-49, and they continue till the time comes when the God of heaven sets up a kingdom that cannot be destroyed. The second chapter takes us at once to the end of the times of the Gentiles, when the day of the Lord is to be enacted. Before the Lord appears in that day, the greatest distress will be upon the land and the people; there will be a great time of trouble such as never was before Matthew 24:21. The remnant of His people will cry to the Lord for intervention and for deliverance, and the Lord will answer their cry and deliver them. Then their land becomes once more like the garden of Eden, there will be a great outpouring of the Spirit upon all flesh and from Jerusalem the great kingdom-center blessings will extend to all the nations.

This whole chapter as well as the next one is therefore unfulfilled. Nothing of it has been fulfilled. Before it can be fulfilled a part of the people Israel must be restored to the land of promise and the ancient ceremonies and institutions be at least partially restored.

The chapter begins with the sounding of the alarm for “the Day of Jehovah cometh, for it is near at hand.” The last prophetic week of Daniel is now in process of fulfilment and near its end. (See annotations on Daniel 9:1-27) A part of the people are back in the land, having returned there in unbelief, just as we see it today in the Zionist movement. But in their midst will also be found a God-fearing remnant. The blowing of the trumpet shows that they have revived their ancient custom Numbers 10:1-22; Numbers 10:9. We also mention that trumpets are often connected with the appearing of the Lord and the restoration of Israel. In the second verse the day is described and may be compared with Zephaniah 1:15-16 and Isaiah 60:2. Then there is an invading army announced which is fully described in the verses which follow. The words, “As the dawn spread upon the mountains,” are a description of the day and not of the army, as some have taken it. On the one hand the day of the Lord is a day of darkness and gloom, on the other hand it is “like the dawn spread upon mountains.” After the darkness, the morning light will break “the morning without clouds” 2 Samuel 23:4.

Verse 11. The Lord’s army appears

Joel 2:3-11. Many armies in past history have occupied the land of Israel and wasted it, but here is the coming great invasion from the north. This invasion is mentioned in the prophet Isaiah also. The Assyrian who came in Isaiah’s day to take Jerusalem is the type of the final Assyrian who threatens the land and the people with destruction. He is also prefigured by Antiochus Epiphanes, who came into the land of Israel as the predicted little horn, rising from one of the divisions of the Graeco-Macedonian Empire Daniel 8:1-27.

This army of Israel’s enemies finds the land like the garden of Eden; it has been restored through political Zionism, irrigated and cultivated. The Jews are at it now, determined to make Palestine the garden-spot of the world, their Eden, as it has been said. Then comes the rude awakening. They thought themselves safe; they dreamed that their plans they had made without trusting in the Lord and without true repentance, had fully succeeded. But now the greatest trouble of their long history of blood and tears is at hand. The land is once more stripped of its beauty.

Before them the land is as the garden of Eden,

And behind them a desolate wilderness,

Yea, and nothing can escape them.

The Lord uses these destructive hosts to humble His people, to show them that He is their help, when this great calamity is upon them. The symbolical language here is characteristic of other prophecies.

The earth trembleth before them;

The heavens shake,

The sun and the moon are darkened,

And the stars withdraw their shining

* * * * *

For the Day of the Lord is great and very terrible.

Compare this with the following passages: Isaiah 11:11; Habakkuk 1:6; Habakkuk 1:12; Zechariah 14:3-21.

Verses 12-17. The repentant remnant

Joel 2:12-17. Here is the Lord calling to His people to return unto Him with true repentance (compare with Hosea 5:15; Hosea 6:11. And during that great tribulation there will be a truly penitent portion of the people who turn to Him in the manner described in this chapter. It is this remnant which will be saved in that day, while the impenitent part will be cut off in judgment. Ezekiel 20:38 and Zechariah 13:8-9 speak of this. What Moses spoke long ago now takes place Deuteronomy 30:1-20). The many prophetic prayers recorded in the Psalms, as pointed out in the annotations of that book, will then be offered up by this godly waiting remnant Psalms 44:13-26; Psalms 115:2-18; Psalms 79:9-13, etc.). This mourning and prayer for deliverance precedes the visible manifestation of the Lord in the day of His coming. When at last deliverance has come there will be another lamentation. This is found in Zechariah 12:9-14 and in Revelation 1:7.

Verses 18-27. The Lord's response to the repentant Jews in the land

Joel 2:18. "Then Jehovah will be jealous for His land and will have pity on His people." Here is the great change. Up to this point we have seen nothing but calamity and judgments. Literal locusts had devoured the land--the types of nations which would prey upon the land. They came, and Jerusalem was trodden down by the Gentiles. The times of the Gentiles terminated in Jacob's trouble, out of which they are to be saved Jeremiah 30:7. We saw their great repentance. Here is the answer from above. When their power is completely gone

Deuteronomy 32:36, then will the Lord be jealous for His land and pity His people. Often this little word “then” is found in the prophetic Word marking the great change, from Israel’s past judgments and rejection to deliverance and glory. The following passages should be carefully examined and compared with the 18th verse here: Isaiah 14:25; Isaiah 24:23; Isaiah 32:16; Isaiah 35:5-10; Isaiah 58:8; Isaiah 58:14; Isaiah 60:5; Isaiah 66:12; Ezekiel 28:25-26, etc.

The Lord’s personal manifestation is not mentioned here. The deliverance does not come apart from the second coming of our Lord. The entire prophetic Word bears witness to this. “Then shall the Lord go forth and fight against those nations as He fought in the day of battle. And His feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem” Zechariah 14:3-21. “When the Lord shall build up Zion, He shall appear in glory” Psalms 102:16. “The Lord shall go forth as a mighty man, He shall stir up jealousy like a man of war; He shall cry, yea, roar, He shall prevail against His enemies” Isaiah 42:13.

Joel 2:19-27. Here is His gracious answer. He will bless their land and make it fruitful once more, as it used to be, the land flowing with milk and honey. It is foolish to spiritualize the terms corn, new wine and oil. Yet it has been done. one of the older commentators of this book says on this verse about corn, wine and oil, that it has been fulfilled in the church. The corn he applies to the body of Christ, the wine to the blood of Christ, and the oil to the Spirit. Earthly blessings, such as belong to His earthly people are exclusively in view. Then they shall be no longer a reproach among the nations. Inasmuch as they are still a reproach we know that this promise is still future in its fulfillment. The one from the north will be overthrown and pass away forever. That all this cannot mean the Babylonian captivity and the small remnant which returned to the land may be learned from the statement “no longer” a reproach.

Because the Lord does all this they are commanded to rejoice, the children of Zion, which does not mean a spiritual Zion, but God’s only true Zion. The early and the latter rain is restored to the land. Of late this term, too, has been strangely misapplied. It has been claimed that the early and latter rain mean spiritual blessing. The early rain, it is said, means the day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit was poured out, and the latter rain, these deluded people tell us, is another Pentecost, a greater manifestation of the Spirit. This latter rain, they teach, consists, according to their conception, in a restoration of “Pentecostal gifts” and is especially evidenced in making strange sounds, which, it is claimed, is the original gift of tongues. This unscriptural teaching has led to all kinds of fanaticism and worse things than that.

Nowhere in the Bible is there warrant for us to believe that “the early and latter rain” has a spiritual significance. To say that the early rain and the latter rain typify blessings and manifestations of the spirit of God, peculiar to the opening of this present age and to its close is extremely fanciful and cannot be verified by the Scriptures. It is strange that even men who seem to possess considerable light have endorsed this kind of exposition, which has worked such harm among so many Christian people. There is absolutely no prediction anywhere in the New Testament that the present age is to close with “a latter rain” experience, a time when the Holy Spirit is poured out and that in greater measure. This age, according to divine revelation, ends in apostasy and complete departure from God and His truth 2 Thessalonians 2:3-17. After the Holy Spirit came on the day of Pentecost, for the formation of the Church, the body of Christ, there is nowhere to be found a promise in the Church Epistles that another outpouring is to take place, by which a part of the Church is to get into possession again of the different sign gifts. The enemy of souls has made good use of these distorted teachings to bring in his most subtle delusions.

The rain has altogether a literal meaning. Read carefully the following passages for a confirmation: Leviticus 26:44; Deuteronomy 11:14-32; 1 Kings 8:33-66 and Jeremiah 3:3.

Then all the harm done by the locusts, the army the Lord used in judging His people, will be restored. “And My people shall never be ashamed” (Joel 2:27). This again is sufficient proof that all this remains unfulfilled.

Verses 28-32. The promise” of the outpoured Spirit

Joel 2:28-32. This interesting passage invites our closest attention. The almost general interpretation of this prophecy has been that it found its fulfillment on the day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit was poured forth. Most expositors confine the fulfillment to that event while others claim that Pentecost was only the beginning of the fulfillment and that the event which occurred once continues to occur throughout this Christian age. We quote from one of the best commentaries. “But however certain it may be that the fulfillment took place at the first Christian feast of Pentecost, we must not stop at this one Pentecostal miracle. The address of the Apostle Peter by no means requires this limitation, but rather contains distinct indications that Peter himself saw nothing more therein than the commencement of the fulfillment, but a commencement indeed, which embraced the ultimate fulfillment, as the germ enfolds the tree; for if not only the children of the apostles’ contemporaries but also those that were afar off--i.e., not foreign Jews, but the far off heathen, were to participate in the gift of the Holy Spirit, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit which commenced on

Pentecost must continue as long as the Lord shall receive into His kingdom those that are still standing afar, i.e., until the fullness of the Gentiles shall have entered the kingdom of God.”

There is, however, no Scriptural foundation for the statement that the outpouring of the Holy Spirit commenced on Pentecost must continue throughout this present age. The Holy Spirit came on the day of Pentecost. He was poured out once, and nowhere in the New Testament is there a continued or repeated outpouring of the Holy Spirit promised. The difficulty with interpreting this great prophecy of Joel of having been fulfilled on Pentecost and being fulfilled throughout this age is that which follows in the next two verses. Wonders in heaven and on earth, fire, pillars of smoke, a darkened sun and a blood-red moon are mentioned, and that in connection with the day of Jehovah, which, as we have seen is the great theme of Joel’s vision. These words have been generally applied to the destruction of Jerusalem, which followed the day of Pentecost. The spiritualizing method has been fully brought into play to overcome the difficulties the 30th and 31st verses raise. The terrible day of Jehovah, it is claimed, is the destruction of Jerusalem. Thus we read in the commentary of Patrick and Lowth: “This (Joel 2:30) and the following verse principally point out the destruction of the city and the temple of Jerusalem by the Romans, a judgment justly inflicted upon the Jewish nation for their resisting the Holy Spirit and contempt of the means of grace.” We quote another leading commentator on Joel 2:30, Dr. Clarke. He states: “This refers to the fearful sights, dreadful portents and destructive commotions by which the Jewish polity was finally overthrown and the Christian religion finally established in the Roman empire. See how our Lord applies this prophecy in Matthew 24:29 and the parallel texts.” And in Joel 2:31 (“the sun shall be turned into darkness”) Clarke says “it means the Jewish polity, civil and ecclesiastical, shall be entirely destroyed.” Others give these words the same spiritualized meaning. These learned doctors tell us that Joel 2:30-31 relate to the destruction of the nation, and the civil and ecclesiastical polity of the Jews! This is a fair example of the havoc which a Bible interpretation makes, which ignores the great dispensational facts revealed in the Word of God. But inasmuch as the 32nd verse, the last verse in this second chapter of Joel, reveals that there shall be deliverance in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem after these signs and wonders, and the continuation of the prophecy in the third chapter shows the judgment of the enemies of the people Israel, God’s ancient people, such interpretations appear at once as fundamentally wrong.

It is strange that all these expositors use the word “fulfillment” in connection with this prophecy, saying, that Peter said that the day of Pentecost was the fulfillment of what is written by Joel. But the Holy Spirit did not use the word

“fulfillment” at all. He purposely avoided such a statement. In so many passages in the New Testament we find the phrase “that it might be fulfilled,” but in making use of the prophecy in Acts, chapter 2, this phrase is not used and instead of it we read that Peter said, “But this is that which was spoken by the Prophet Joel” Acts 2:16. There is a great difference between this word and an out and out declaration of the fulfillment of that passage. Peter’s words call the attention to the fact that something like that which took place on the day of Pentecost had been predicted by Joel, but his words do not claim that Joel’s prophecy was there and then fulfilled. Nor does he hint at a continued fulfillment or coming fulfillment during this present age. The chief purpose of the quotation of that prophecy on the day of Pentecost was to point out to the Jews, many of whom were scoffing, that the miraculous thing which had happened so suddenly in their midst was fully confirmed by what Joel had foretold would be the effect of the outpouring of the Spirit. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit had taken place, but not in the full sense as given in the prophecy of Joel. He came for a special purpose, which was the formation of the Church and for this purpose He is still on earth.

Without following the events on Pentecost and their meaning it is evident from the entire prophecy, which precedes this prediction of the outpouring of the Spirit, that these words have never been fulfilled. We might briefly ask, What is necessary according to the contents of this second chapter in Joel, before this prophecy can be accomplished? We just mention what we have already learned before in our exposition. The people Israel must be partly restored to their land, that great invasion from the north, bringing such trouble to the land must have taken place, then there must also have come the intervention of the Lord and He must be jealous for His land and pity His people, then at that time this great outpouring of the Spirit of God will take place. It stands in the closest connection with the restoration of Israel. The promises which are Israel’s Romans 9:4 may be grouped into two classes, those which pertain to the land, earthly blessings and supremacy over the nations, and spiritual blessings, such as knowing the Lord, walking in His ways, being a kingdom of priests and prophets. The earthly blessings are accomplished by the power of Jehovah when He is manifested as their deliverer and the spiritual blessings will be conferred upon them by the outpouring of the Spirit.

The word “afterwards” with which this prophecy is introduced refers to the same period of time as the phrase “in the latter days,” that is, the days when the Lord will redeem His earthly people and be merciful to His land.

Therefore when the Holy Spirit came on the day of Pentecost it was not in fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy. This prophecy has never been fulfilled nor will it

be fulfilled during this present age, in which the Church is being formed, which is the body of the Lord Jesus Christ. After this is accomplished the Lord will begin His relationship with His earthly people, when He appears in His day then they will experience the fulfillment of this great prediction.

There are numerous passages in the Old Testament which shed interesting light upon this future outpouring of the Spirit (see Isaiah 32:15; Isaiah 44:3-28; Isaiah 59:19-21; Ezekiel 36:27-38; Ezekiel 37:14; Ezekiel 39:29).

Joel 2:32. The great coming outpouring of the Spirit upon all flesh will result in salvation. It is blessedly true now that “whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved,” but it will be also true in that day. The word our Lord spoke, “salvation is of the Jews” will find its largest fulfillment. The nations will then be joined to the Lord in the kingdom Zechariah 2:11.

Archaeological light

Jerash is the site of the ruins of the Greco-Roman city of **Gerasa**, also referred to as **Antioch on the Golden River**. Ancient Greek inscriptions from the city as well as literary sources from both Iamvichou and the Great Etymology establish the foundation of the city as being by Alexander the Great or his general Perdiccas, who settled aged Macedonian soldiers there (Γερασμένοϛ-Gerasmenos means aged person in Greek). This took place during the spring of 331 BC, when Alexander left Egypt, crossed Syria and then went to Mesopotamia. It is sometimes misleadingly referred to as the "Pompeii of the Middle East or Asia", referring to its size, extent of excavation and level of preservation (though Jerash was never buried by a volcano). Jerash is considered one of the most important and best preserved Roman cities in the Near East. It was a city of the Decapolis.

Jerash was the birthplace of the mathematician Nicomachus of Gerasa (Greek: Νικόμαχος) (c. 60 – c. 120 AD).

Recent excavations show that Jerash was already inhabited during the Bronze Age (3200 BC - 1200 BC). After the Roman conquest in 63 BC, Jerash and the land surrounding it were annexed by the Roman province of Syria, and later joined the Decapolis cities. In AD 90, Jerash was absorbed into the Roman province of Arabia, which included the city of Philadelphia (modern day Amman). The Romans ensured security and peace in this area, which enabled its people to devote their efforts and time to economic development and encouraged civic building activity.

In the second half of the 1st century AD, the city of Jerash achieved great prosperity. In AD 106, the Emperor Trajan constructed roads throughout the province, and more trade came to Jerash. The Emperor Hadrian visited Jerash in AD 129-130. The triumphal arch (or Arch of Hadrian) was built to celebrate his visit. A remarkable Latin inscription records a religious dedication set up by members of the imperial mounted bodyguard wintering there.

The city finally reached a size of about 800,000 square meters within its walls. The Persian invasion in AD 614 caused the rapid decline of Jerash. However, the city continued to flourish during the Umayyad Period, as shown by recent excavations. In AD 749, a major earthquake destroyed much of Jerash and its surroundings. During the period of the Crusades, some of the monuments were converted to fortresses, including the Temple of Artemis. Small settlements continued in Jerash during the Ayyubid, Mameluk and Ottoman periods. Excavation and restoration of Jerash has been almost continuous since the 1920s.



The above and following photograph: Part of the ruins at Jerash, Jordan



III. THE EVENTS OF THE DAY OF THE LORD: ISRAEL'S ENEMIES JUDGED AND THE KINGDOM ESTABLISHED

Chapter 3

The judgment of the nations

- 1. The judgment of the nations (Joel 3:1-8)*
- 2. The preceding warfare of the nations and how it ends (Joel 3:9-16)*
- 3. Jehovah in the midst of His People (Joel 3:17-21)*

Verse 1. Israel's end-time restoration

Verses 2-16. The nations judged

Joel 3:1-8. The first verse specifies the time when Jehovah will do what He announces in the two verses which follow. It will be in those days, in that time, when the captivity of Judah and Jerusalem is brought back. Clearly then up to this time this cannot yet have been, for the captivity of His people is not yet ended. They are still scattered in the great dispersion among the nations of the earth. The time is future when the captivity of Judah and Jerusalem is brought back. Israel, the ten tribes are not mentioned here, but they are included in the prophecy; they will likewise be brought back. Joel only mentions Judah, because His prophecy was addressed to Judah and Jerusalem. The captivity, or dispersion, which is the same thing, of the people Israel will not end till divine power accomplishes it according to the many promises in the Word of God. And when at last the heavens are silent no longer and Jehovah in His power begins to fulfil His promises and their captivity ends, it will mean judgment for the nations.

It is Jehovah Himself who speaks, what He is going to do in that day, when He arises and has mercy on Zion. "I will also bring together all nations and will bring them down into the valley of Jehoshaphat." How the Lord will bring these nations together and then accomplish His purpose is revealed in Joel 3:9-12. We therefore pass it by for the present till we reach the second part of this chapter. But here is also the place mentioned where this great judgment of nations will be executed. It will be in the valley of Jehoshaphat. The word means translated "Jehovah judges." This name occurs elsewhere in the Word of God. King Jehu was the son of Jehoshaphat and he was the son of Nimshi 2 Kings 9:22. Significant names of the king who had to judge, for Jehu means "He is Jehovah;" Jehoshaphat, "Jehovah judges;" Nimshi, "Jehovah reveals."

In 2 Chronicles 20:1-37 we read the account of King Jehoshaphat's victory over hostile nations. But the place where this took place is not the valley of Jehoshaphat, but it was called "Berachah," that is blessing. We mention this for some expositors have claimed that the place where King Jehoshaphat brought judgment upon these nations is the valley of which Joel speaks.

The valley of Jehoshaphat must be looked for in the immediate vicinity of Jerusalem. It is generally placed in the valley of the Kidron on the East of Jerusalem. It may not yet be in existence. In Zechariah 14:1-21 we read of the same events which are here predicted. When the Lord appears His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives in that day. The Mount of Olives will then cleave in the

midst and there will be formed a very great valley Zechariah 14:4. This great valley may be the valley where the Lord judges the nations.

In the valley of Jehoshaphat the Lord will deal with the nations and His judgment will be on account of His people and heritage Israel. The nations scattered them and divided His land. They treated His people like slaves, casting lots for His people, sold a girl for wine and drank it.

The great sin of the nations, the Gentile world-powers, is the sin against Israel. This is repeatedly mentioned by God's prophets. The foundation of the judgment of the nations of which our Lord speaks in Matthew 25:1-46 is likewise the treatment of the Jew. Read also Psalms 79:1-3; Psalms 83:1-18; Isaiah 29:1-24; Isaiah 34:1-17; Jeremiah 25:13-38; Zechariah 1:14-21; Zechariah 12:2-14.

In Joel's day such wickedness as described here of casting lots for His people and selling boys and girls was partially known. The Philistines had done this, as well as Tyre and Sidon. But these words were fulfilled during the Babylonian captivity and in that great dispersion which was brought about by the Roman Empire. After the destruction of Jerusalem in the year 70 the very thing happened spoken by the prophet. Nearly a million and a half of human beings perished in Jerusalem and the land in that awful warfare. Over 100,000 were taken prisoners. These hundred thousand Jews were disposed by Titus according to Josephus in the following manner: "Those under seventeen years of age were publicly sold; of the remainder, some were executed immediately, some sent away to work in the Egyptian mines (which was worse than death), some kept for public shows to fight with wild beasts in all the chief cities; only the tallest and most handsome were kept for the triumphal procession in Rome." Jews were sold for so small a price as a measure of barley; thousands were thus disposed of. And what else could we add from the history of centuries, the cruel and terrible persecutions God's heritage suffered, the thousands and tens of thousands massacred, tortured, outraged and sold as slaves. Have we not beheld but recently similar horrors in Germany? And that history is not yet finished. Outbreaks of hatred against the heritage Israel are still to come and the time of Jacob's trouble soon to come will eclipse all their former suffering. It will be a time of trouble such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now nor ever shall be Matthew 24:21. The day will come when the Lord will judge the nations for the evil they have done.

Joel 3:9-16. This is a prophecy showing what precedes the judgment of these nations. The judgment hosts of the Lord, the angels, are seen coming down, then He appears in all His majesty, while sun and moon are darkened. It is a great

dramatic scene which the Spirit of God unfolds. We arrange it, adding the different speakers, to bring out its full value:

The Lord speaking:

Proclaim this among the nations;

Declare a war,

Arouse the mighty ones,

Let all the men of war draw near, let them come up!

Beat your ploughshares into swords,

And your pruning hooks into spears.

Let the weak say, I am strong.

Come together

All ye nations round about

Gather yourselves together.

The Prayer of the Prophet:

Thither cause Thy mighty ones to come down,

O Jehovah!

The Lord speaking:

Let the nations arise and come up

To the valley of Jehoshaphat,

For there will I sit to judge all the nations round about.

The Lord to His judgment hosts:

Put in the sickle,

For the harvest is ripe;

Come--Tread!

For the wine-press is full,

The vats overflow;

For their wickedness is great.

The Prophet beholding the gathering:

Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision!

For the day of Jehovah is at hand in the valley of decision.

The sun and the moon are darkened

And the stars withdraw their shining.

And Jehovah shall roar from Zion

And send forth His voice from Jerusalem,

And the heavens and the earth shall shake;

But Jehovah will be a refuge for His people

And a fortress for the sons of Israel.

Throughout the prophetic Word we read that great nations confederated will oppose God and His purposes when this age closes. There will be a great western confederacy, the restored Roman Empire. (See annotations on Daniel 2:1-49; Daniel 7:1-28.) There will also be a great northeastern alliance of nations. This is in view here. Consult Psalms 2:1-12, Psalms 68:1-6; Isaiah 29:1-24; Isaiah 34:1-17; Jeremiah 25:29-38; Ezekiel 38:1-23, Zechariah 12:1-14; Zechariah 14:1-21, and Revelation 19:19. Judgment then falls upon these opposing nations. The judgment is mentioned as reaping and treading the winepress, the same as in Revelation 14:14-20.

Verses 17-21. Full kingdom blessing

Joel 3:17-21. Like nearly all the other prophetic books Joel ends with the vision of the kingdom and the Lord dwelling in the midst of His people. He will appear in all His glory. Jehovah will be a refuge for His people. Then they will come to that knowledge which they so long refused, that the delivering Jehovah is their

God. But the Jehovah who appears there is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ, the one who was in their midst and who was delivered by the people to be crucified. What a day it will be when “They will look upon Him whom they have pierced and mourn for Him” Zechariah 12:10. He will dwell in Zion, the mountain of glory. The glory from above will find a resting place on that holy hill. There He will be enthroned as King Psalms 2:6. From there the glory will be spread over all Isaiah 4:5-6; Psalms 68:16. “For the Lord hath chosen Zion; He hath desired it for His habitation. This is my rest forever; here will I dwell for I have desired it” Psalms 132:13-18. It is the literal Zion and not something spiritual. Even good expositors of the Bible have missed the mark. One good commentator says: “For Zion or Jerusalem is of course not the Jerusalem of the earthly Palestine, but the sanctified and glorified city of the living God, in which the Lord will be eternally united with His redeemed, sanctified and glorified Church.” Such exposition emanates from ignorance of God’s purposes with His earthly people and in not dividing the Word of Truth rightly.

Joel speaks also of the judgment which will fall upon Egypt in that day. Isaiah also tells of judgment, but through him we learn that Egypt will turn to the Lord and the Lord will graciously heal Egypt Isaiah 19:1-25). Judah will abide forever. His people will be cleansed. Jehovah, our ever blessed Lord, will dwell in Zion. The happy and glorious state of the land and the whole earth during the millennium is thus tersely stated. For when He reigns there will be righteousness and peace; glory will cover the earth as the waters cover the deep. Thus ends the great vision of Joel, the son of Pethuel. May the eye of faith behold these blessed revelations and may we live in anticipation of what is soon to be.

The Prophecies in the Book of Joel

Joel, whose name, according to St. Jerome, signifies The Lord God: or, as others say, The Coming Down of God: prophesied about the same time in the kingdom of Judea, as Osee did in the kingdom of Israel. He foretells under figure the great evils that were coming upon the people for their sins: earnestly exhorts them to repentance: and comforts them with the promise of a Teacher of Justice, viz., Christ Jesus Our Lord, and of the coming down of his Holy Spirit.

In recent years there has been much said and written about the concept of Joel's Army being the great end-times army of Godly warriors who bring Revival in the last days. However, it is very clear from the Scriptures that the army in Joel that they are referring to is actually an army of LOCUSTS which God sends as a JUDGEMENT upon the land. It is only later, after this army of locusts has devoured and destroyed every good thing in the land, and has then been driven into the desert and the sea by God, that He sends a great outpouring of the Holy

Spirit and a mighty "harvest". In other words, this locust army of judgement and devastation sweeps through first, and it is only after it has been driven away to destruction by God that true Revival can come. This is very clear from the Scriptures.

There is no doubt at all that Joel is truly an "end-time" book, prophesying a series of events that culminates in the end of the age. It is certainly a very important book for us to study, and it is clearly vital that we understand what it predicted what would take place in those last days.

Right from the beginning of Joel, it is clear that this devouring army coming upon the land is a judgement from God: "What the cutting locust left, the swarming locust has eaten. What the swarming locust left, the hopping locust has eaten, and what the hopping locust left, the destroying locust has eaten." (Joel 1:4). In fact it is clear that it is GOD HIMSELF who raises up and deploys this army against His own people and the land: "The land is like the garden of Eden before them, but after them a desolate wilderness, and nothing escapes them... They leap upon the city, they run upon the walls; they climb up into the houses, they enter through the windows like a thief... The LORD utters His voice before his army, for His host is exceedingly great; he that executes His word is powerful. For the day of the LORD is great and very terrible; who can endure it?" (Joel 2:3-11).

But soon after this we read: "Then the LORD became jealous for His land, and had pity on His people. The LORD answered and said to His people, 'Behold, I am sending to you grain, wine, and oil, and you will be satisfied;... I will remove the northerner far from you, and drive him into a parched and desolate land, his front into the eastern sea, and his rear into the western sea; the stench and foul smell of him will rise, for he has done great things.'" (Joel 2:18-20).

And now that this devouring army has been driven away to destruction, we read of the great Revival that God then sends upon the land: "He has poured down for you abundant rain, the early and the latter rain, as before. The threshing floors shall be full of grain, and the vats shall overflow with wine and oil. I will restore to you the years which the swarming locust has eaten, the hopper, the destroyer, and the cutter, my great army, which I sent among you" (Joel 2:23-25).

And now comes that famous Scripture, prophesying the great 'last days' Revival: "And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions..." (Joel 2:28).

After this, Joel goes on to speak about the great day upon the earth at the end of the age, and the bringing in of thousands into the kingdom of God and we know this as the Day of Pentecost.

Just like the other prophets who preach judgement, they always also have a vision of fulfilment and restoration through the Messiah or the Messianic age which is the Church Age. Joel is no exception. The first part of the book are talking about this plague, a judgement, from God. And then starting at Chapter 2 verse 28, the Messianic age is spoken of.

Chapter 1

- The prophet describes the judgments that shall fall upon the people, and invites them to fasting and prayer.

1:1. The word of the Lord, that came to Joel, the son of Phatuel.

1:2. Hear this, ye old men, and give ear, all ye inhabitants of the land: did this ever happen in your days, or in the days of your fathers?

1:3. Tell ye of this to your children, and let your children tell their children, and their children to another generation.

1:4. That which the palmerworm hath left, the locust hath eaten: and that which the locust hath left, the bruchus hath eaten: and that which the bruchus hath left, the mildew hath destroyed.

That which the palmerworm hath left, etc... Some understand this literally of the desolation of the land by these insects: others understand it of the different invasions of the Chaldeans, or other enemies.

1:5. Awake, ye that are drunk, and weep, and mourn all ye that take delight; in drinking sweet wine: for it is cut off from your mouth.

1:6. For a nation come up upon my land, strong, and without number: his teeth are like the teeth of a lion: and his cheek teeth as of a lion's whelp.

1:7. He hath laid my vineyard waste, and hath pilled off the bark of my fig tree: he hath stripped it bare, and cast it away; the branches thereof are made white.

1:8. Lament like a virgin girded with sackcloth for the husband of her youth.

1:9. Sacrifice and libation is cut off from the house of the Lord: the priests, the Lord's ministers, have mourned:

1:10. The country is destroyed, the ground hath mourned: for the corn is wasted, the wine is confounded, the oil hath languished.

1:11. The husbandmen are ashamed, the vinedressers have howled for the wheat, and for the barley, because the harvest of the field is perished.

1:12. The vineyard is confounded, and the fig tree hath languished: the pomegranate tree, and the palm tree, and the apple tree, and all the trees of the field are withered: because joy is withdrawn from the children of men.

1:13. Gird yourselves, and lament, O ye priests, howl, ye ministers of the altars: go in, lie in sackcloth, ye ministers of my God: because sacrifice and libation is cut off from the house of your God.

1:14. Sanctify ye a fast, call an assembly, gather together the ancients, all the inhabitants of the land into the house of your God: and cry ye to the Lord:

1:15. Ah, ah, ah, for the day: because the day of the Lord is at hand, and it shall come like destruction from the mighty.

1:16 Is not your food cut off before your eyes, joy and gladness from the house of our God?

1:17. The beasts have rotted in their dung, the barns are destroyed, the storehouses are broken down: because the corn is confounded.

1:18. Why did the beasts groan, why did the herds of cattle low? because there is no pasture for them: yea, and the flocks of sheep are perished.

1:19. To thee, O Lord, will I cry: because fire hath devoured the beautiful places of the wilderness: and the flame hath burnt all the trees of the country.

1:20. Yea, and the beasts of the field have looked up to thee, as a garden bed that thirsteth after rain, for the springs of waters are dried up, and fire hath devoured the beautiful places of the wilderness.

Chapter 2

- 2:1. Blow ye the trumpet in Sion, sound an alarm in my holy mountain, let all the inhabitants of the land tremble: because the day of the Lord cometh, because it is nigh at hand.

The day of the Lord... That is, the time when he will execute justice upon sinners.

2:2. A day of darkness, and of gloominess, a day of clouds and whirlwinds: a numerous and strong people as the morning spread upon the mountains: the like to it hath not been from the beginning, nor shall be after it, even to the years of generation and generation.

A numerous and strong people... The Assyrians, or Chaldeans. Others understand all this of an army of locusts laying waste the land.

2:3. Before the face thereof a devouring fire, and behind it a burning flame: the land is like a garden of pleasure before it, and behind it a desolate wilderness, neither is there any one that can escape it.

2:4. The appearance of them is as the appearance of horses, and they shall run like horsemen.

2:5. They shall leap like the noise of chariots upon the tops of mountains, like the noise of a flame of fire devouring the stubble, as a strong people prepared to battle.

2:6. At their presence the people shall be in grievous pains: all faces shall be made like a kettle.

2:7. They shall run like valiant men: like men of war they shall scale the wall: the men shall march every one on his way, and they shall not turn aside from their ranks.

2:8. No one shall press upon his brother: they shall walk every one in his path: yea, and they shall fall through the windows, and shall take no harm.

2:9. They shall enter into the city: they shall run upon the wall, they shall climb up the houses, they shall come in at the windows, as a thief.

2:10. At their presence the earth hath trembled, the heavens are moved: the sun and moon are darkened, and the stars have withdrawn their shining.

2:11. And the Lord hath uttered his voice before the face of his army: for his armies are exceedingly great, for they are strong, and execute his word: for the day of the Lord is great and very terrible: and who can stand it?

2:12. Now, therefore, saith the Lord. Be converted to me with all your heart, in fasting, and in weeping, and mourning.

2:13. And rend your hearts, and not your garments and turn to the Lord your God: for he is gracious and merciful, patient and rich in mercy, and ready to repent of the evil.

2:14. Who knoweth but he will return, and forgive, and leave a blessing behind him, sacrifice and libation to the Lord your God?

2:15. Blow the trumpet in Sion, sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly,

2:16. Gather together the people, sanctify the church, assemble the ancients, gather together the little ones, and them that suck at the breasts: let the bridegroom go forth from his bed, and the bride out of her bridal chamber.

2:17. Between the porch and the altar the priests, the Lord's ministers, shall weep, and shall say: Spare, O Lord, spare thy people: and give not thy inheritane to reproach, that the heathens should rule over them. Why should they say among the nations: Where is their God?

2:18. The Lord hath been zealous for his land, and hath spared his people.

2:19 And the Lord answered, and said to his people: Behold I will send you corn, and wine, and oil, and you shall be filled with them: and I will no more make you a reproach among the nations.

2:20. And I will remove far off from you the northern enemy: and I will drive him into a land unpassable, and desert, with his face towards the east sea, and his hinder part towards the utmost sea: and his stench shall ascend, and his rottenness shall go up, because he hath done proudly.

The northern enemy... Some understand this of Holofernes and his army: others, of the locusts.

2:21. Fear not, O land, be glad, and rejoice: for the Lord hath done great things.

2:22. Fear not, ye beasts of the fields: for the beautiful places of the wilderness are sprung, for the tree hath brought forth its fruit, the fig tree, and the vine have yielded their strength.

2:23. And you, O children of Sion, rejoice, and be joyful in the Lord your God: because he hath given you a teacher of justice, and he will make the early and the latter rain to come down to you as in the beginning.

2:24. And the floors shall be filled with wheat, and the presses shall overflow with wine, and oil.

2:25. And I will restore to you the years which the locust, and the bruchus, and the mildew, and the palmerworm hath eaten; my great host which I sent upon you.

2:26. And you shall eat in plenty, and shall be filled and you shall praise the name of the Lord your God; who hath done wonders with you, and my people shall not be confounded for ever.

2:27. And you shall know that I am in the midst of Israel: and I am the Lord your God, and there is none besides: and my people shall not be confounded forever.

2:28. And it shall come to pass after this, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy: your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions.

2:29. Moreover, upon my servants and handmaids in those days I will pour forth my spirit.

2:30. And I will shew wonders in heaven; and in earth, blood, and fire, and vapour of smoke.

2:31. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood: before the great and dreadful day of the Lord doth come.

2:32. And it shall come to pass, that every one that shall call upon the name of the Lord, shall be saved: for in Mount Sion, and in Jerusalem shall be salvation, as the Lord hath said, and in the residue whom the Lord shall call.

Chapter 3

- 3:1. For behold in those days, and in that time when I shall bring back the captivity of Juda, and Jerusalem:

3:2. I will gather together all nations and will bring them down into the valley of Josaphat: and I will plead with them there for my people, and for my inheritance, Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations, and have parted my land.

3:3. And they have cast lots upon my people: and the boy they have put in the stews, and the girl they have sold for wine, that they might drink.

3:4. But what have you to do with me, O Tyre, and Sidon, and all the coast of the Philistines? will you revenge yourselves on me? and if you revenge yourselves on me, I will very soon return you a recompense upon your own head.

3:5. For you have taken away my silver, and my gold: and my desirable, and most beautiful things you have carried into your temples.

3:6. And the children of Juda, and the children of Jerusalem, you have sold to the children of the Greeks, that you might remove them far off from their own country.

3:7. Behold, I will raise them up out of the place wherein you have sold them: and I will return your recompense upon your own heads.

3:8. And I will sell your sons, and your daughters, by the hands of the children of Juda, and they shall sell them to the Sabeans, a nation far off, for the Lord hath spoken it.

3:9. Proclaim ye this among the nations: Prepare war, raise up the strong: let them come, let all the men of war come up.

3:10. Cut your ploughshares into swords, and your spades into spears. Let the weak say: I am strong.

3:11. Break forth, and come, all ye nations from round about, and gather yourselves together: there will the Lord cause all thy strong ones to fall down.

3:12. Let them arise, and let the nations come up into the valley of Josaphat: for there I will sit to judge all nations round about.

3:13. Put ye in the sickles, for the harvest is ripe: come and go down, for the press is full, the fats run over: for their wickedness is multiplied.

3:14. Nations, nations in the valley of destruction: for the day of the Lord is near in the valley of destruction.

3:15. The sun and the moon are darkened, and the stars have withdrawn their shining.

3:16. And the Lord shall roar out of Sion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem: and the heavens and the earth shall be moved, and the Lord shall be the hope of his people, and the strength of the children of Israel.

3:17. And you shall know that I am the Lord your God, dwelling in Sion, my holy mountain: and Jerusalem shall be holy, and strangers shall pass through it no more.

3:18. And it shall come to pass in that day, that the mountains shall drop down sweetness, and the hills shall flow with milk: and waters shall flow through all the rivers of Juda: and a fountain shall come forth of the house of the Lord, and shall water the torrent of thorns.

A fountain shall come forth of the house of the Lord, etc... Viz., the fountain of grace in the church militant, and of glory in the church triumphant: which shall water the torrent or valley of thorns, that is, the souls that before, like barren ground brought forth nothing but thorns; or that were afflicted with the thorns of crosses and tribulations.

3:19. Egypt shall be a desolation, and Edom a wilderness destroyed: because they have done unjustly against the children of Juda, and have shed innocent blood in their land.

3:20. And Judea shall be inhabited for ever, and Jerusalem to generation and generation.

Judea - and Jerusalem... That is, the spiritual Jerusalem, viz., the church of Christ.

3:21. And I will cleanse their blood, which I had not cleansed: and the Lord will dwell in Sion.

More about the fulfillment of Joel's Prophecies

Joel succeeds in making a smooth transition, which is so common of the Old Testament prophets, and moves quite naturally from the temporal blessings to the spiritual blessing in the sense that Joel was talking of what God would do if they repent and then right in to the description of the Messianic age. This occurs, I believe, because one blessing of God simply calls to mind the greatest blessings of God. The prophets cannot help themselves but to project beyond the immediate relief and deliverance to the hope that God gives in that ultimate great thing He does for His people, namely sending the Messiah. Let's view how this transition transpires: Joel 2:25

So I will restore to you the years that the swarming locust has eaten,
The crawling locust,
The consuming locust,
And the chewing locust,
My great army which I sent among you.
26 You shall eat in plenty and be satisfied,
And praise the name of the LORD your God,
Who has dealt wondrously with you;
And My people shall never be put to shame.
27 Then you shall know that I am in the midst of Israel:
I am the LORD your God
And there is no other.
My people shall never be put to shame.

After this we certainly do find Joel moving into the prophecy of the Messianic age. This cannot be denied truthfully because the verses that follow the above are verses that the Apostle Peter himself said were fulfilled on the Day of Pentecost.

28 “ And it shall come to pass afterward
That I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh;
Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,
Your old men shall dream dreams,
Your young men shall see visions.

29 And also on My menservants and on My maidservants
 I will pour out My Spirit in those days.
 30 “ And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth:
 Blood and fire and pillars of smoke.
 31 The sun shall be turned into darkness,
 And the moon into blood,
 Before the coming of the great and awesome day of the LORD.
 32 And it shall come to pass
 That whoever calls on the name of the LORD
 Shall be saved.
 For in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be deliverance,
 As the LORD has said,
 Among the remnant whom the LORD calls.

These verses have many echos in the New Testament however the most obvious are verses 28-32 on the Day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit came upon them and the Apostles and the others began to speak in tongues and the crowds gathered in wonder. When Peter quotes Joel he says "and it shall come to pass in the last days"(Acts 2:17) while Joel said, "And it shall come to pass afterward". Peter recognized where he and all others were in relation to time and in the inspired mind of Peter they were experiencing the last days. As the month of August progresses we may deal more with this phrase "last days" but Peter is certainly making it appear that "these last days" are the beginnings of the Church Age. but more precisely "these last days" is more than likely the end of the Jewish economy, the Jewish system - age of the Old Covenant.

The real point, however, of Joels prophecy is that the Holy Spirit was going to come upon "all flesh", something widely unknown of in Joel's day. Certain individuals received the Holy Spirit but nothing like what Joel was prophesying and what Peter told did happen upon those in Jerusalem. Even Moses wished for the Spirit of God to come upon all the Lord's people (Numbers 11), but that never happened in those days as it did on the Day of Pentecost and from that time upon the Church.

Was the Prophecy of Joel 2 Fulfilled?

When we look at the first Pentecost the disciples or apostles celebrated after Jesus' death, we can read part of the message that Peter proclaimed, which includes a section from a prophecy in Joel 2:

“But Peter, standing up with the eleven, raised his voice and said to them,
 ‘Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you,

and heed my words. For these are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day. But this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel” (Acts 2:14-16).

Peter tells the people that heard the rushing wind that what they have witnessed is the fulfillment of a prophecy that he is going to tell them, a prophecy that Joel spoke and the Jews of that time would have known. Peter tells them what they are witnessing is not drunkenness, but a fulfillment of Joel 2:28-32.

This is the prophecy that Peter said was fulfilled:

“And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, that I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your you men shall see visions, your old men shall dream dreams. And on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days; and they shall prophesy. I will show signs in heaven above and signs in the earth beneath: blood and fire and vapor of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the coming of the great and notable day of the Lord. And it shall come to pass that whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved” (Acts 2:17-21).

Peter quotes a section of prophecy from Joel, not just a couple of verses. Peter is saying that the whole prophecy was fulfilled, not just part of it. Peter does not imply that only part was fulfilled, but he says “But this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel” (Acts 2:16). Many people feel that Peter could not be saying that all this was fulfilled because the signs and such “are not to come until the great day of the Lord.” But is that what Peter meant?

We have many examples of prophecies of Jesus being fulfilled that were only one verse quoted of the prophecy that Jesus fulfilled. The gospel writer did not quote more of the prophecy that did not have to do with what Jesus did at that moment. Peter did not just quote the beginning of the prophecy, but the whole of it and said that it, the whole of it, was what they were seeing fulfilled before their eyes. Is it possible?

First, we have to see that Peter understood that the last days started when Jesus died on the cross and was resurrected. He understood that he was now living in the last days.

“God who at various times and in different ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds” (Heb 1:1-2).

“For Christ has not entered the holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us; not that He should offer Himself often, as the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood of another. He then would have had to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now, once at the end of the ages, He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself” (Heb 9:24-26).

The writer of Hebrews shows that we are now in the last days and that Christ offered the sacrifice of Himself for us at the end of the ages—the start of a new time referred to as the last days.

“He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you” (1 Pet 1:20).

We can see that Peter did understand that he was in the last days and the prophecy of Joel was being fulfilled. So, we see from other scriptures that the last days Joel mentioned were starting and that this prophecy was now taking place.

What Was the Prophecy About?

The prophecy was about the coming of the Holy Spirit upon all men, not just select men of Israel. God promised He would pour out His Spirit on all flesh, your sons and daughters would prophesy (tell people about God and Christ), young men would see visions, old men would dream dreams. So children would receive the Holy Spirit as well as old people.

God did not want to allow people to misunderstand the word *all*, so he even includes the servants that people had, not just men, but women also. God literally meant all people, men, women and children. All people would prophesy and tell of God and Jesus. All men would be saved that called upon the name of the Lord. We see here the gospel of faith in Jesus Christ would save people, not their works.

But what about the seeming switch to the future, the ‘day of the Lord’, in verses 19 and 20? Is there really a switch? Was Peter mistaken and only part of the prophecy fulfilled? The answer is definitely not! Peter knew that it was all fulfilled, it had happened and the things they had seen were the witness that it was happening right then at that time. The prophecy was fulfilled and from that time on the Holy Spirit was to be available to all mankind that would put their faith in Jesus Christ as their Savior.

“I will show wonders in heaven above and signs in the earth beneath: blood and fire and vapor of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and awesome day of the Lord.”
(Acts 2:19-20)

Joel in the prophecy explains that all these things that he was told, the coming of the Holy Spirit on all flesh, and yes, these signs, would come before that day. Mankind would have the Holy Spirit before that awful time. We, today, know that it has been available for almost 2,000 years and the day of the Lord has not come yet, but the signs did. The signs all happened before Peter gave the message on Pentecost. Let's look at the signs that Joel said would show that the Holy Spirit was going to be given.

Fulfilments of Signs

Because it is possible to show more fulfillments of these signs, I will separate the “wonders in heaven above and signs in the earth beneath” as different from the “blood, fire, vapor of smoke, sun darkness and moon to blood” even though the text indicates that they are really speaking of the same things.

1. Wonders in heaven above

a.) “Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, saying, ‘Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him.’... When they heard the king, they departed; and behold the star which they had seen in the East went before them, till it came and stood over where the young Child was” (Matt 2:1-2, 9).

b.) “Now there were in the same country shepherds living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. And behold, an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were greatly afraid. Then the angel said to them, ‘Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which will be to all people. For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be the sign to you: You will find the Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger.’

And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of heavenly host praising God and saying: ‘Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men!’” (Luke 2:8-14).

c.) “Now when He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel, who also said, ‘Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven’” (Acts 1:9-11).

2. Signs in earth beneath

a.) “Now on the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they, and certain other women with them, came to the tomb bringing the spices which they had prepared. But they found the stone rolled away from the tomb. Then they went in and did not find the body of the Lord Jesus.

And it happened, as they were greatly perplexed about this, that behold, two men stood by them in shining garments. Then, as they were afraid and bowed their faces to the earth, they said to them, ‘Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen! Remember how He spoke to you when He was still in Galilee, saying, “The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again.”’ And they remembered His words” (Luke 24:1-8).

b.) At the end of the story of the two disciples on the road to Emmaus Jesus walked with them and taught them:

“But they constrained Him, saying, ‘Abide with us, for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent.’ And He went in to stay with them. Now it came to pass, as He sat at the table with them, that He took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they knew Him; and He vanished from their sight” (Luke 24:29-31).

c.) “Now as they said these things Jesus Himself stood in the midst of them, and said to them, ‘Peace to you.’ But they were terrified and frightened, and supposed they had seen a spirit. And He said to them, ‘Why are you troubled? And why do doubts arise in your hearts? Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself. Handle Me and see for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see I have’” (Luke 24:36-39)

d.) “Then, behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth quaked, and the rocks split, and the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised; and coming out of the

graves after His resurrection, they went into the holy city and appeared to many.” (Matt 27:51-53).

And there are additional miracles that Jesus did that I have not the space to mention.

3. Blood

The blood is pretty self-explanatory, it is Jesus Christ’s blood shed on the cross for our sins. The blood that today covers our guiltiness for the sins that we have committed. The blood that makes it possible for us to have the very righteousness of Jesus given on our account, that we can be children of God.

4. Fire

“Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them” (Acts 2:3).

5. Vapour of smoke

“And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting” (Acts 2:2).

In Joel 2:30 it is translated “pillars of smoke”. Pillars comes from the Hebrew word, Strong’s #8490, *timarah*, which means “a column, cloud, or pillar”. In Acts 2:19 the word “vapor” comes from Strong’s #822, *atmis*, which comes from #109 and is translated “mist or vapor”. Strong’s #109, *aer*, means “to breathe unconsciously, to blow air”. Thus the mighty wind would be blowing air.

When you have dusty streets and dirt floors and there is a wind mighty enough that the multitude of people there in Jerusalem could hear it from wherever they were, there would be much dust, like smoke in the air.

We see from the words that God chose to be used that it could be a cloud or a blowing that formed a cloud. The rushing mighty wind was the “vapor of smoke” or the blowing of air to make a smoke-like appearance. There had to be some noticeable sign that the Jews knew where to run.

“And when this sound occurred, the multitude came together, and were confused, because everyone heard them speak in his own language” Acts 2:6).

Another sign on the earth

6. The sun shall be turned to darkness

“Now from the sixth hour until the ninth hour there was darkness over all the land” (Matt 27:45). The sun was darkened over all the land, not just in Jerusalem at the place of Jesus’ crucifixion.

7. The moon into blood

This had to do with the timing of the crucifixion. Jesus would have died for mankind at the time of the Passover lamb, as our Passover Lamb, and there would have been a full moon. If you want to see this happen, the next full moon go out and if it is clear as the sun goes down and the full moon comes up, the moon is red like blood from the sun shining on it.

We can see from the Bible that all of the signs that Joel was told to prophesy were there for all of the people who knew them to see. The people there listening to Peter speak did not question what Peter was saying, they were cut to the heart.

“Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, ‘Men and brethren, what shall we do?’ Then Peter said to them, ‘Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call’” (Acts 2:37-39).

Peter ends with what they should do and then states the very things that he had quoted from Joel. They would receive the Holy Spirit, they and their children and all that were afar off, that being even us today.

What a wonderful message God inspired Peter to tell that day, and it is the message that we should be proclaiming even yet today to all that will listen. That they too can call upon the name of the Lord and they, like us, can be saved. They can receive the Holy Spirit just as the people there that day did, they and their children, we and our children.

If we do not proclaim the message of the coming of the Holy Spirit like Peter, people may not know they can have a relationship themselves with Jesus and God. The veil was torn in two and you, me and every human being has access to God. If we will put our faith in our Saviour and call on His name, we shall be saved.



Eastern shepherd with his flock

Commentary on the Book of Amos

Introduction

A few years before the prophet Hosea began to witness against the apostasy of the house of Israel, the ten tribes, and announced the coming judgment, there appeared in Bethel, the seat of idolatry a peasant by the name of Amos. He was not a citizen of the ten-tribe kingdom, but belonged to Tekoa, a small town in the south country of Judah. We learn from the book that he was a herdman and a gatherer of the fruit of the sycamore trees. Some have thought he was a man of wealth, in possession of large flocks of sheep and herds of cattle, but this cannot be confirmed. He was just an humble peasant and while engaged in his calling, not being a prophet or the son of a prophet, the Lord suddenly called him to leave his work and said unto him “Go, prophesy unto My people Israel” (Amos 7:14-15). Amos means “bearer” or “burden.” In obedience to this command he appeared in Bethel to discharge his prophetic duty and deliver the messages of Jehovah to the people. It was a strange occurrence that a prophet should come out of Judah to prophesy to Israel, it probably attracted wide attention, for such a thing had never happened before nor after. It greatly aroused Amaziah, the priest

of Bethel, who reported the case to Jeroboam, the king of Israel. The message the priest sent to the king was the following: “Amos has conspired against thee in the midst of the house of Israel, the land is not able to bear all his words. For thus saith Amos, Jeroboam shall die by the sword, and Israel shall surely be led away captive out of their land” (Amos 7:10). Evidently the priest did not await the king’s answer for he tried to intimidate the prophet and drive him away, but Amos was a man of courage, he boldly resisted the priest and announced the fate of the priest and his family.

The Time of His Prophecy

There is no difficulty with the age in which he prophesied. This is stated in the opening verse of the book. “In the days of Uzziah, King of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam, the son of Joash, King of Israel, two years before the earthquake.” Jeroboam II became king in the fifteenth year of the reign of Amaziah, King of Judah. Jeroboam reigned forty-one years. As Amaziah reigned over Judah twenty-nine years and was followed by Uzziah, Jeroboam’s reign was during fourteen years of Amaziah’s reign and covered twenty-seven years of Uzziah’s reign. Amos’ activity was during the period when Uzziah was king in Judah, in the second half of Jeroboam’s reign. The earthquake which is mentioned, two years before which Amos began his work, cannot be placed chronologically. It is also mentioned by Zechariah (Zechariah 14:5). The time then is around 810-782 B.C. As we have shown in the introduction to Joel, Amos knew Joel’s prophecy, because Joel preceded him by at least a half a century. Amos was therefore somewhat earlier than Hosea and part of his ministry was contemporary with Hosea.

The Characteristics of His Times

Under the reign of Jeroboam II the northern kingdom of Israel flourished as never before nor after. There was a great external prosperity. Therefore, we find that the prophet mentions the rich, their great wealth and luxury, their arrogant pride and self-security and the oppression of the poor. Underneath it all was an awful moral corruption, the fruit of the false worship. In this state of prosperity, immorality and false worship they did not dream of any coming calamity whatever. Such were the days in which the herdman of Tekoa appeared upon the scene to give an inspired testimony against the nation.

The Style of Amos

Attention has been called to the fact that the prophet’s style and composition show the former herdman in the use of certain words and in many figures and

similes drawn from nature and rural life. But he also shows a very close acquaintance with the Mosaic law and the history of the people to whom he belonged. The style also shows great rhetorical power, great depths of thought, and truly poetic expressions.

“Amos expressed his thoughts in words taken from the great picture book of nature, which, being also written by the hand of God, so wonderfully expresses the things of God. Scarcely any prophet is more glowing in style, or combines more wonderfully the natural and the moral world, the Omnipotence and Omniscience of God” (Dr. Pusey). Augustinus selected Amos as an illustration of unadorned eloquence. And another learned scholar speaks of him thus, “Let any fair judge read his writings, thinking not who wrote them, but what he wrote, and he will come to the conclusion that this herdman is in no wise behind the very chiefest prophets; in the loftiness of his thoughts and the magnificence of his spirit, nearly equal to the highest; and in the splendor of his diction and the elegance of the composition scarcely inferior to any” (Bishop Lowth, *De Poesi Sacra*) .

He gives us a splendid example of inspiration. The Lord called him, gave him the message, filled the simple herdman with the wisdom from above so that he burst out in these eloquent utterances. At the same time the Lord in using him as His mouthpiece did not set aside his personality, he uses his shepherd idiom, and the truth of God is expressed through him in the terms of nature, with which he, as a child of nature, was so familiar.

The Message of Amos

The message concerns chiefly Israel, the ten-tribe kingdom, their spiritual and moral condition, yet Judah is also noticed by him, as well as the different nations, surrounding Israel, their Gentile enemies. The book consists of the prophecies he uttered in Bethel, which follow the two introductory chapters. The people are reproved and their sins uncovered; judgment for them and for the nation is announced. The end of the book brings in the promise of deliverance and restoration. The great prophecy in the ninth chapter (Amos 9:11-12) was quoted by James in the first great church-council in Jerusalem Acts 15:1-41.

The Division of the Book of Amos

The book of Amos consists of three parts. The first part comprises the two opening chapters which form the introduction to the book. In them we find the judgments announced in store for the nations surrounding Israel, but Judah and Israel are also included. From the third chapter to the end of the sixth is the

second part. Here are recorded four prophecies given by the Lord through Amos. Three of them begin with “Hear this Word” and the last in chapter six begins with “Woe.” The third part, chapters seven to nine, give the five visions which Amos had. The first two judgment visions were not carried out on account of the intercession of the prophet. The third vision is that of the plumb-line; the fourth, the vision of the basket with ripe fruit. In the last vision he beheld the Lord standing alongside of the altar, ready to smite. The conclusion of the ninth chapter is a prophecy concerning the restoration of Israel, the rebuilding of the tabernacle of David and the blessings of the kingdom. We follow this division.

I. JUDGMENT OF THE NATIONS, JUDAH, AND ISRAEL (1-2)

II. THE PROPHETIC MESSAGES UNCOVERING THE CONDITION OF THE PEOPLE (3-6)

III. THE FIVE VISIONS OF THE PROPHET (7-9)

I. JUDGMENT ANNOUNCED AGAINST THE NATIONS, JUDAH, AND ISRAEL

Chapter 1

1:1-2:3. Judgment upon surrounding nations

1. The introduction (Amos 1:1-2)

2. Damascus (Amos 1:3-5)

3. Philistia (Amos 1:6-8)

4. Tyre (Amos 1:9-10)

5. Edom (Amos 1:11-12)

6. Ammon (Amos 1:13-15)

1:1-2. Superscription

Amos 1:1-2. It has been pointed out that Amos does not say like so many of the other prophets, “the Word of the Lord which came unto me,” but he begins his prophecy with the statement “the words of Amos.” The fact of divine inspiration, however, is expressed in the next words “which he saw.” His messages, like the messages of all the prophets, were given to him in vision. As stated in the general introduction to this book, this first verse determines the

exact time when the herdman of Tekoa appeared with his message. The earthquake mentioned must have been a disastrous one, for there was a great flight of people Zechariah 14:5.

Then follows his first utterance which Joel recorded in his prophecy, “the LORD roars out of Zion.” Inasmuch as Joel prophesied in Judah and Amos appeared from Judah in Bethel of the ten-tribe kingdom, this sentence Of coming judgment was probably unknown to his hearers. He sounded the alarm at once as to the coming judgment on account of which the shepherds would mourn and the beautiful, luxurious Carmel would wither, it would bring disaster upon all.

1:3-2:3. Judgment upon six nations

Amos 1:3-5. Six nations are mentioned against which judgment is announced, five in this chapter and Moab in the beginning of the second. Eight times we read “saith the LORD.” Then in each judgment prediction we find the phrase, “for three transgressions or four ... I will not reverse it.” The meaning of it is that the measure is full and that the judgment cannot be averted. Fire is prominently mentioned as the mode of judgment. These nations were the enemies of Israel. The Syrians were the great enemies of Israel and treated them with awful cruelties. The threshing of Gilead with iron instruments took place when Hazael of Damascus conquered the land east of Jordan 2 Kings 10:32-36; 2 Kings 13:7. Hazael murdered Ben-hadad and Elisha predicted all the horrible things he would do to Israel. When the man of God wept and Hazael asked him the reason, Elisha answered, “Because I know the evil that thou wilt do unto the children of Israel; their strongholds wilt thou set on fire, and their young men wilt thou slay with the sword, and wilt dash their children, and rip up their women with child” 2 Kings 8:12. Damascus was broken and the predicted judgment came. It was executed through the King of Assyria, Tiglath-Pileser, who drove the Syrians back to Kir, from which they had come 2 Kings 16:9.

Amos 1:6-8. Philistia is represented by Gaza. They also mistreated Israel and sold them into the hands of Edom. 2 Chronicles 21:16. The cities of Philistia; Gaza and its palaces would be consumed by fire. There would be an end to the Philistines, “the remnant of the Philistines shall perish saith the LORD.”

Amos 1:9-10. Tyrus, the capital of Phoenicia, had also sinned against Israel by delivering them into the hands of their great enemy Edom. Their sin was especially heinous because David and Solomon had made a covenant with the King of Tyre, hence no King of Judah or Israel had ever warred against Tyre 2 Samuel 5:11; 1 Kings 5:1-18) .

Amos 1:11-12. Edom was closely related to Israel, yet they hated more than the heathen nations hated Israel. At every opportunity Edom expressed this hatred by deeds of cruelty. What an awful record! “He did pursue his brother with the sword, and did cast off all pity, and his anger did tear perpetually, and he kept his wrath forever.” In Obadiah we find more concerning Edom.

Amos 1:13-15. Wicked Ammon had tried to exterminate the people for selfish reasons “to enlarge their border.” What horrible deeds to rip open women with child! Nor is this confined to the barbarous warfare of 3,000 years ago; the same was done in other wars down to our own days. Judgment would overtake them also.

In meditating on these terse judgment messages we must remember while these nations of the past have ceased existing as nations, and the predicted judgment came long ago, that these nations are typical of the other nations, who also sin against Israel and whose judgment will come “in that day.”

Chapter 2

2:4-16. Judgment upon Judah and Israel

1. *Moab* (Amos 2:1-3)

2. *Judah* (Amos 2:4-5)

3. *Israel* (Amos 2:6-16)

Amos 2:1-3. So fierce was the hatred of Moab that they dishonored the bones of the king of Edom. “Moab burned the bones of the king of Edom into lime” (see 2 Kings 3:26-27). The fire or judgment came upon Moab and her glory, too, departed like the glory of the other nations.

Verses 4-5. Judgment upon Judah

Amos 2:4-5. While the measure was full of these nations, who had heaped transgressions upon transgressions, Judah and Israel were as guilty, yea, even more guilty, than these nations. The same significant phrase “for three transgressions and four” is used in connection with both. If the punishment of the nations could not be held back, but had to come, so Judah and Israel could not escape. Judah’s sin was the rejection of the law of the Lord; instead of listening to the voice of the Lord and to His prophets, they harkened to the false prophets, who, with their lies, caused them to err, and the children walked in the evil footsteps of their fathers. The sin of Judah was apostasy. That is the great

sin today among the professing people of God, Christendom. Fire was to devour the cities and palaces of the nations and fire was to come upon Judah and the palaces of Jerusalem. Nebuchadnezzar fulfilled this prophecy.

Verses 6-16. Judgment upon Israel

Amos 2:6-16. Inasmuch as Amos was sent to Israel the indictment and judgment of them occupies more space than the rest. Amos 2:6-8 give a description of their sins. The poor suffered through their covetousness, they lived in unspeakable vileness, they were idolatrous. Those who were condemned by judges and paid their fines furnished the money to the judges to buy wine for their heathenish orgies.

Then the Lord reminds them of all His mercies and loving kindness in the past. He destroyed the Amorite; He led them through the wilderness to possess the land. He instituted the Nazarite. In spite of all these manifold mercies they continued in their evil ways, grinding the poor, defying God and His law and in their moral depravity.

Behold, I will press you down As the full cart presses the sheaves. Then shall flight be lost to the swift, And the strong shall not confirm his strength, And the hero shall not save his life. He that beareth the bow shall not stand, And the swift-footed shall not save, And the rider of the horse shall not save his life.

II. THE PROPHETIC MESSAGES UNCOVERING

THE CONDITION OF THE PEOPLE

Chapter 3

3. Israel's greater privilege and guilt

The First Discourse

- 1. There is cause for judgment (Amos 3:1-8)*
- 2. The coming judgment visitation (Amos 3:9-15)*

Verses 1-11. Because of her greater privilege

Amos 3:1-8. "Hear this word that the LORD hath spoken against you, O children of Israel, against the whole family which I brought up from the land of Egypt, saying, You have I only known of all the families of the earth, therefore

will I punish you for all your iniquities.” This is the solemn beginning of the special messages addressed to the nation by the humble herdsman of Tekoa. The Lord had singled them out from the other nations. He had separated them unto Himself. With His mighty power and outstretched arm He had delivered them from the house of bondage and brought them to the land promised unto their fathers. He had revealed Himself and made known His will to them exclusively. He had entered with them into covenant and called them to be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation Exodus 19:6. Hence their responsibility was very great, for the degree of relationship is always the degree of responsibility. The divine election of the twelve tribes does not insure against punishment, but that intimate relationship into which the Lord had entered with Israel broken and violated by sin, demanded a correspondingly great punishment. To whomsoever much is given of him shall much be required. Our Lord expressed the same truth in Matthew 11:1-30 when he denounced the cities in which great miracles had been done and they believed not and declared that it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for them.

To demonstrate the rightful cause of judgment Amos speaks now in a number of brief similes. There are six of them in the form of questions. “Can two walk together, except they be agreed?” Fellowship is only possible on the ground of separation; a holy God demands a holy people. In their state of licentious idolatry and gross injustice the Lord could not own them. Then follow brief questions indicating that which would happen to them. Like a roaring lion, or a young lion, the Lord would come upon them. They will be caught in a snare and a trap. The blowing of the trumpet denotes that evil was to come upon them. “Shall there be evil in a city, and the LORD has not done it?” It is hard to believe that certain men have taken this statement and teach on account of it that God is the author of moral evil--of sin. The context shows that this is not in view here at all. A holy God who cannot be tempted with evil, who is light and in whom there is no darkness at all, does not put moral evil in the world. The evil is of a punitive character such as invasion by hostile forces, the sword, the famine and the pestilence.

And the Lord Jehovah will do nothing, but He revealeth His secrets unto His servants, the prophets. These secrets are made known to us in the prophetic Word and not, as some claim, in special visions. The Spirit of God, the author of the Word, shows to God’s people in His Word things to come John 15:15; 1 Corinthians 2:10-16. The result of such knowledge of the secrets of the Lord concerning the future is stated in 2 Peter 3:17, “Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness.” (See also 2 Peter 3:14.)

Verses 12-15. The thoroughness of the divine judgment

Amos 3:9-15. This paragraph begins with a striking call. The speaker is the Lord and He addresses the prophets and commands them to cry in the palaces of Ashdod (Philistia) and in Egypt so that they may see and know the wicked acts of Samaria, and thus bear witness against Israel. Thus the Lord exposed them to their enemies. Then the coming adversary is announced who would encircle the land and humiliate the proud nation, so that her palaces would be spoiled. Then the herd man speaks in a parable familiar to him from his life as a shepherd. When the beast of prey devours a sheep the shepherd must bring proof of it, so he is anxious to recover a part of the slain animal and tries to snatch away from the devouring lion either the legs of the sheep, or even a small piece of the ear, so as to show the rest was eaten by the lion. Such would be the case with the people in their luxurious living, and only a small remnant is to escape the coming slaughter by the lion, the Gentile world power. The transgressions of Israel will be visited; the idol altars of Bethel will be overthrown in that visitation and all their prosperity and luxury would then end and instead of living in winter and summer houses, they would become homeless.

Chapter 4

5. Prepare to meet your God, O Israel

The Second Discourse

- 1. Divine threatening and irony (Amos 4:1-5)*
- 2. Yet have ye not returned unto Me (Amos 4:6-11)*
- 3. Prepare to meet thy God (Amos 4:12-13)*

Verses 1-3. Indictment of the wealthy women of Samaria

Verses 4-5. Israel's abominable ritualism

Amos 4:1-5. The prophet addresses them as “kine of Bashan, that are in the mountain of Samaria.” The cows of Bashan were noted for their sleek and well-fed condition, feeding on the choicest of pasture. The term is descriptive of Israel's prosperous condition as well as their beastly character. They were selfish and cruel, for they oppressed the poor and crushed the needy. It seems that women are mostly here in view, which explains the fact that the comparison is with kine and not with bulls. They asked their masters to supply them means for debauchery. But what happens to dumb cattle would happen to them in their

luxurious and selfish life. They would be taken with hooks and their posterity with fishhooks, and they would be taken away. The last sentence of Amos 3:3 is correctly translated “Ye shall be cast away to Har (mountain) Monah.” It has been surmised that this means Armenia.

Then follows a statement of bitter irony. “Go to Bethel and sin; at Gilgal multiply transgression.” Go on in your idolatry in these sacred places of your past history! In Bethel the Lord had revealed Himself to the progenitor Jacob; in Gilgal on the banks of the Jordan, the reproach of Egypt had been rolled away Joshua 5:1-15, and these favored places were now the scenes of their wicked idolatries. It is also mockery when the prophet says, “Offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving with leaven,” for leaven always typifies sin.

Verses 6-13. Israel must face God’s judgment

Amos 4:6-11. The Lord had sent different chastisements upon them at different times. There had been famines, drought; yea, it had rained here and there, while lots of ground received rain others remained parched, so that they might recognize in it the hand of God. He smote them with mildew and blasting; the locusts came and devoured vegetation; there were frightful pestilences and other judgments, but they did not return unto Him. Five times in this paragraph we find the same statement, “Yet have ye not returned unto Me.” They were an impenitent nation and hardened their hearts as Pharaoh did. They were incorrigible, though they knew that through His mercy they were “as a firebrand plucked out of the burning.”

In the book of Revelation we read of a similar condition in the coming days when the Lord deals with the earth in the decreed and revealed judgments. It is written that the inhabitants of the earth, in spite of these judgments falling upon the earth, do not repent of their sins.

Amos 4:12-13. And now they were to come face to face with Himself as the judge.

Chapter 5

6. Seek the Lord and live

The Third Discourse

1. The lamentation (Amos 5:1-3)

2. Seek the Lord and ye shall live (Amos 5:4-15)

3. *The wailing* (Amos 5:16-20)

4. *The captivity announced* (Amos 5:21-27)

Verses 1-3. A lament for the fallen and forsaken nation

Amos 5:1-3. This chapter begins with a lamentation over the fallen daughter of Israel. “She shall no more rise” has been used as an argument against the future and literal restoration of Israel. The prophet has only the present government of God over that generation in view and does not deny at all a future rising as so abundantly predicted in the prophetic Word. “There is none to raise her up, “nor could she raise herself up. But the day will come when the Lord in grace will raise her.

Verses 4-17. Seek the Lord

Amos 5:4-15. Here the Lord entreats Israel once more to desist from her idolatrous way and to seek Him instead of the worship at Bethel and Gilgal, for judgment would surely be executed there. “Seek ye Me and ye shall live.” Then again, “Seek the LORD and ye shall live,” and in case of disobedience, He, whom they refused, would fall like fire upon the house of Joseph. The house of Joseph is mentioned because the tribe of Ephraim was the most powerful tribe in the kingdom of Israel, and Joseph was the father of Ephraim. Again they are told to seek Him “Who maketh the seven stars (the Pleiades) and Orion.” These two great constellations were well known to the ancients Job 9:9; Job 38:31. And He also turneth the shadow of death into morning and darkeneth day to night. This is an illustration of the judicial actions of the Lord. As in nature He turns night into day, and the day into dark night, so He turns the deepest misery and sorrow into joy and happiness, and changes the bright day of prosperity into the night of woe and disaster. He is the Lord of judgment, who controls the waters of tribulation and wrath, the floods of judgment, and makes them pass over the earth.

Amos 5:10-13 give a description of the moral condition of Israel. They were unrighteous and loved the ways of unrighteousness; if the judge in the gate judged righteously they hated him for it, those who spoke uprightly they abhorred. The poor they trampled into the dust and extorted the distribution of corn from them. They had built fine houses of hewn stone, but they were not to enjoy them nor the wine from their pleasant vineyards Deuteronomy 28:30; Deuteronomy 28:39. The Lord knew their transgressions and the greatness of their sins.

Still there was hope, for the Lord is merciful and slow to anger. Judgment is His strange work. Therefore once more we hear His pleadings, “Seek good and not evil that ye may live, and so the LORD God of hosts shall be with you, as ye have spoken.” “Hate evil and love good!”

Verses 18-20. Be warned of the Day of the Lord

Amos 5:16-20. As judgment comes there shall be wailing in the streets, wailing with the husbandman, and there will be wailing in all vineyards as the Lord passes through in His judgment. “For I will pass through thee” reminds us of Egypt in the passover night when the Lord passed through Egypt to smite. And now the death wail was soon to be heard in the midst of His people.

And still another evil was in their midst. Some of them brazenly desired the announced “day of the Lord,” the day of His manifestation to come. It originated in their false boast that they are the covenant people. They knew from the former prophets that the day of the Lord would rid them of their enemies, then Israel would be fully redeemed and blest and the Lord’s glory would be manifested in the sight of the nations. Such was Joel’s vision concerning “that day.” Such was their false hope while they lived on in sin. But the herdman, Amos, pronounced a woe upon them for desiring that day. What good will that day be to the impenitent nation? It is a day of darkness and not light. Then follows a parable such as a child of nature, as Amos was, would make. He describes a man who flees from a lion and fortunately escapes; but then he meets a bear, him he escapes likewise. Exhausted he reaches his house, and like one about to faint, he leans his hand on the wall; a small serpent out of the crevice bites him and he perishes miserably. So would the day of the Lord overtake them. How different it is with the true believer. He desires, not the Day of the Lord, but the coming of Him, who has promised His own, “I will come again and receive you unto Myself, that where I am ye may be also.”

Verses 21-27. The Lord’s hatred of their empty religionism

Amos 5:21-27. The Lord despised their outward worship; their feast days and different offerings were not well pleasing in His sight. It was all a hollow pretense of honoring Him, and all their songs were hateful to Him.

But this departure from Him was not a new thing in their history. They were always a stiffnecked people. Even in the wilderness did they not bring Him sacrifices and offerings, but instead they bore the tabernacle of Moloch and Chiun (or the booth of your king and the pedestal of your images, the star of

your gods). Then follows the verdict, “Therefore will I cause you to go into captivity beyond Damascus, saith the LORD, whose name is the God of Hosts.”

Chapter 6

7. Calamity upon the self-secure

The Fourth Discourse

1. Woe to them that are at ease in Zion (Amos 6:1-6)

2. The punishment announced (Amos 6:7-14)

Verses 1-7. Warning to self-indulgent sinners

Amos 6:1-6. This woe concerns the great men, the chiefs of the nation, who were sunk into a godless self-security, and dreamt on in their darkness, while the clouds of judgment were gathering above them. They were to go from Calneh to Hamath and then down to Gath of the Philistines. Calneh was built by Nimrod in the land of Shinar Genesis 10:10; Hamath was the capital of a Syrian kingdom, and Gath the center of Philistia. These places were the places of vileness and corruption. But were the kingdoms of both Judah and Israel any better than these?

While some desired the day of the Lord others put it far off, they refused to believe that judgment was impending. It was so in Ezekiel’s time when the people said “The days are prolonged and every vision faileth” Ezekiel 12:22. So it is in Christendom. The evil servant Matthew 24:1-51 says “My Lord delayeth His coming, and as a result he acts outrageously. What were the results in Israel when the evil day was put far off? They committed violence; violence increased in the land. They lived luxuriously on beds of ivory and ate the best of the flock. They danced and made merry; they drank wine but none was exercised over the hurt of Joseph, the spiritual condition of the people.

Verses 8-14. Punishment is inevitable

Amos 6:7-14. They were now to go away as captives. There should be utter desolation. There would be a multitude of dead, so that they could not follow their ancient custom in burying them; they would have to burn them. Then the one who burns the corpses asks the last person in the house whether there is any one still with him, and the answer is No, but keep silence! For the name of the Lord is not to be invoked. It means that the speaker fears that the other one might mention the name of the Lord and in doing so bring down upon himself

an additional judgment. Everything is to be smitten. What they had done could no more secure blessing and salvation than horses could run upon a rock and one plowing upon a rock with oxen. The nation which is announced in the last verse is the Assyrian.

III. THE FIVE VISIONS OF THE PROPHET

Chapter 7

7. The locust plague, the drought and the plumb line

Three Visions and the Opposition Against Amos

- 1. The vision of locusts (Amos 7:1-3)*
- 2. The vision concerning the fire (Amos 7:4-6)*
- 3. The vision of the plumbline (Amos 7:7-9)*
- 4. Opposition against Amos (Amos 7:10-17)*

Verses 1-3. The locust plague

Amos 7:1-3. In the first vision Amos saw how the Lord prepared locusts (not grasshoppers as in the A.V. They started in with their destructive work, just as they did in the day of Joel. Then Amos interceded in behalf of the sinful nation, “O Lord, GOD, forgive, I beseech Thee, by whom shall Jacob rise for he is small?” He confessed and pleaded forgiveness, acknowledging their helplessness. With such a spirit the Lord is well pleased and the praying prophet received the answer from the Lord, “It shall not be, saith the LORD.”

Verses 4-6. The drought

Amos 7:4-6. He beheld a furious fire sweeping everything before itself so that it even devoured the great deep, the floods of water. This represents a more severe judgment than the previous one. This judgment also was kept back by the intercession of the prophet. But when the time came for judgment by the Assyrian, symbolized by the locusts and the fire, no intercession could change it. Tiglath-Pileser and Shalmaneser finally made an end of the sinful ten tribe kingdom.

Verses 7-9. The plumb line

Amos 7:7-9. He saw the Lord standing upon a wall with the plumbline to see if the wall was straight. The test by God's Word and God's holy law shows that all is crooked and must be condemned. Therefore, the announcement, "I shall pass by it no more. And the high places of Isaac shall be desolate, and the sanctuaries of Israel shall be laid waste; and I will rise against the house of Jeroboam with the sword." The false worship and the monarchy in Israel will be completely swept away by the judgment.

Verses 10-17. Amos and Amaziah

Amos 7:10-17. This is an interesting and instructive occurrence. Amaziah, the apostate priest at Bethel, who had charge of the idol worship, accused the prophet falsely before King Jeroboam. It was a religious political accusation. Thus the enemy accused Jeremiah also Jeremiah 37:14-21; he did the same with our Lord and His apostles. At the same time Amaziah, the priest, sent an insulting message to Amos, saying, "Seer, go and flee into the land of Judah, and eat there thy bread; there thou mayest prophesy." He tried to intimidate him, urging him to return to Tekoa in Judah where he came from. He received a courageous answer from the herdman-prophet. "I am no prophet, nor a prophet's son, but I was a herdman and a gatherer of sycamore fruit. The LORD took me from following the flock, He said unto me, Go and prophecy to My people Israel."

The insinuation was that Amos prophesied for the sake of a living. Amos refutes the false charge and then announced the doom of the false priest and the doom of his family.

Chapter 8

8.The fruit basket

The Fourth Vision: The Basket with Summer Fruit

- 1. The vision (Amos 8:1-3)*
- 2. Israel ripe for judgment (Amos 8:4-10)*
- 3. The coming days of famine (Amos 8:11-14)*

Verses 1-3. The basket of ripe produce

Amos 8:1-3. In his fourth vision the prophet beholds a basket of summer fruit. The Hebrew shows that it was a basket filled with ripe fruit. The ripe fruit is a symbol that Israel was ripe for the harvest of judgment. The message of the Lord to the prophet is, "The end is come upon My people Israel; I will not again pass by them any more." The songs would be changed into howling lamentations and many should be slain.

Verses 4-14. The reason for the end

Amos 8:4-10. Once more the wealthy and prosperous portion of the nation is addressed, their sinful practices are exposed and it is shown that they were ripe for judgment. The rich oppressed the poor; they took away from the poor what belonged rightfully to them. They cheated by making the measure small and increased the price. They were the profiteers of that time. They also used false balances. Then they sold the refuse of the wheat. All may be compared with James 5:1-6 where the same conditions are pictured, prevailing in Christendom, before the Lord comes. For all this they did the land would have to tremble and every one mourn.

"And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord GOD, that I will cause the sun to go down at noon, and I will darken the earth in the clear day." Much nonsense has been written on this verse especially from the side of the Adventists, as if there has been a certain time "a dark day" in fulfillment of this prophecy. Some expositors have made of it a mere eclipse of the sun. The verse, while it has a certain application to that generation, whose glory should end like the sun going down at noon, has its final meaning in the coming day of the Lord, which all the prophets announced. It is the same our Lord predicts in Matthew 24:29-30. For Israel the bitter day of mourning, lamentation and woe would come.

Amos 8:11-14. A great famine is announced. It is not to be a famine for bread, or thirst for water, but a famine of hearing the words of the Lord. His Word and the light of His revelation is to be completely withdrawn from them. The Word of the Lord which they despised they would then desire to seek in vain. They will wander hither and thither from sea to sea, from the north to the east; they shall run to and fro to seek the Word of the Lord and shall not find it. Such was the case with them when the cruel Assyrian power took hold on them and carried them away. Such a judgment too is fast approaching for Christendom which in its apostasy rejects the Word of the Lord, turns to fables, till the day

comes when the Spirit will leave and as a result there will be a famine of the Word, no comfort and no help for those who are ripe for judgment.



Sycamore fig tree with its fruit

Chapter 9

9:1-10. The Lord at the altar

The Passing of a Kingdom and the Coming of the Kingdom

1. The fifth vision: The passing of a kingdom (Amos 9:1-10)

2. The coming of the kingdom (Amos 9:11-15)

Verses 1-6. The Lord at the altar

Verses 7-10. The Lord and sinful Israel

Amos 9:1-10. In his fifth vision the prophet saw the Lord standing by the altar. He utters His word. The description of what is to take place is very vivid. He stands by the altar and the people are assembled before Him. He smites the lintel of the door, so that everything trembles and the building falls upon them, cutting

all of them in the head and none can escape. Even if they break into sheol (not hell, but the world of spirits in the unknown regions), from thence His hand will take them; if they climb into heaven, He would bring them down. If they hide themselves on the top of Carmel He would search for them and take them out. If they conceal themselves from His sight in the bottom of the sea, He would command the serpent to bite them. It is to be an all consuming judgment with no possibility of escape.

Even as they went into captivity the sword of judgment would follow them. “Thence will I command the sword, and it shall slay them; and I will set Mine eyes upon them for evil, and not for good.” He is the Lord who has all power to do this (Amos 9:5-6). They had degraded themselves down to the level of the heathen nations, hence they were unto Him like the Ethiopians. Then He calls them “the sinful kingdom.” This kingdom is to pass away from the face of the earth, there is no hope for its restoration. But the Lord in mercy promises that the house of Jacob is not utterly to be destroyed. In His own time He will assemble the outcasts of Israel with dispersed Judah and lead them back to their land. In the meantime they will be sifted among all nations, as wheat is sifted in a sieve, but not the least grain shall fall on the ground. The sinners of His people will die by the sword.

9:11-15. Future kingdom blessing

Amos 9:11-15. While the sinful kingdom, the ten-tribe kingdom of Israel, is passed away and will never come into existence again, there is another kingdom which will come, into which Judah and Israel will be gathered with the nations of the earth. This kingdom of heaven, promised to David, is now announced by the prophet. “In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, and close up the breaches thereof; and I will raise up its ruins, and I will build it as in the days of old.” This prophecy is quoted by James in Acts 15:15-16 at the first great church council held in Jerusalem. On that occasion the Holy Spirit used the prophecy of Amos to unfold the program of God concerning the future. Yet there is no church council, no general conference, general assembly or general association which reckons in any way with that which the Spirit of God has laid down as the program of the future. We learn from the passage in Acts that during this age the Gentiles are visited to gather out from among them a people for His Name (the Church). When this is accomplished the Lord returns, and, as a result of His return, the restoration of the tabernacle of David takes place: that is, the kingdom will be restored to His people, the kingdom of heaven comes and the Lord Jesus Christ will be enthroned as its king upon the throne of David. Then the conversion of the world will take place.

This is seen here in the passage before us. Amos 9:12 tells us that when the tabernacle of David is raised up, when “that day” has come, His people restored and saved will possess the remnant of Edom and all the nations. The last three verses of the prophecy of Amos describe the millennium in its earthly blessings. It also shows the permanent blessing and glory into which redeemed and restored Israel has entered, “They shall no more be pulled up out of their land which I have given them, saith the LORD thy God.”

The Prophecies of Amos, applicable to the twenty-first century

Amos prophesied that God would bring His people back to their land. In 1948, the nation of Israel was reborn. At the second coming of *Christ*, God will permanently restore Israel in her fullness with peace and prosperity. Amos provides eloquent prophecies of the future restoration of Israel. God revealed that He would include the Gentiles as He raises the temple of David at *Christ's* first coming. *Jesus Christ, the Messiah*, fulfilled this prophecy by bringing the good news (gospel) to Jew and Gentile.

Amos 1-2: The eight judgments on nations

Amos 3-6: The reasons for judgment on Israel

Amos 7-9(1-10): The five visions of judgment

Amos 9(11-15): The restoration of Israel

Today in our Western world

Does what we see happening to our Western world today relate to Bible prophecy? Will we eventually exhaust God's longsuffering and patience if we persist in our transgressions of His laws? What are some of the main principles we should learn from the Old Testament book of Amos?

Nearly three millennia ago in the eighth century B.C., the Hebrew prophet Amos wrote a highly significant book indicting the amoral and immoral behavior of Israel and Judah along with that of some surrounding Mideastern nations. Seldom read or heeded today, how do the warning words of Amos impact our world of the 21st century?

Amos begins his prophecy by articulating God's anger against Syria, Gaza, Ammon and Moab—Mid-eastern nations that anciently bordered Israel and Judah—and whose descendants remain in that general area even today. Several times he uses the phraseology, "For three sins [transgressions of God's law, 1 John 3:4 Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the

transgression of the law.]...even for four" in establishing the basic reasons for the divine displeasure with them.

Amos out of step?

But the focus of this prophetic book soon shifts primarily to the 10-tribe northern nation of Israel and secondarily to the southern country of Judah. At the general time of his prophecy, Amos appeared to be out of step with the times in prophesying disaster for the house of Israel. Both nations were enjoying relative prosperity and power under the governments of the time. One scholarly book observed: "Seldom was a prophet so out of step with his times." But was he really?

Historical hindsight shows us that roughly 30 years after Amos' prophecy the Assyrians took the northern tribes into captivity (721 to 718 B.C.). At that time Israel ceased to function as a sovereign nation. Clearly Amos had been a great patriot in warning the house of Israel to cease and desist from its ungodly lifestyle and to begin a serious campaign of commandment-keeping.

"But let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream," was the way God eloquently expressed His divine wishes (Amos 5:24) "But let judgment run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream." However, subsequent events sadly proved that the house of Israel paid little attention either to Amos or to the contemporary Hebrew prophet Hosea, also divinely sent to warn the country.

God held ancient Israel responsible

When God chooses a nation for a sacred responsibility, He holds it specifically accountable for its national conduct.

"Hear this word the LORD has spoken against you, O people of Israel—against the whole family I brought up out of Egypt [referring to the Exodus]" (3:1).

This prophecy also includes the southern house of Judah, which later went into national captivity at the hand of Nebuchadnezzar's Babylon well over 100 years after the demise of the house of Israel.

But why was our Creator so concerned about Israel's bad behavior? God had said: "You only have I chosen of all the families [nations] of the earth; therefore I will punish you for all your sins. Do two walk together unless they have agreed to do so?" (verses 2-3). The house of Israel was clearly out of step with God—

foolishly going in a completely different direction, a path that could only lead to further untold sufferings and misery.

Blatant injustices in the courts, careless disregard for citizens living in poverty and sheer complacency were some of Israel's primary transgressions. Real patriotism was in very short supply. God indicted the elite and the intelligentsia with the words: "You do not grieve over the ruin of Joseph" (6:6). They did not comprehend the signs of that time, nor understand the massive problems the house of Israel (which "Joseph" symbolized) was drifting into.

Running out of patience?

If Christians are told to develop patience, God is the epitome of long-suffering, ever waiting for sinners to repent. But at the time of Amos' writing, His patience with the house of Israel was rapidly running out. God had said: "I will spare them no longer" (7:8). And after showing Amos a basket of mature summer fruit He sternly stated: "The time is ripe for my people Israel; *I will spare them no longer*" (8:2).

Remember that our Creator had given humankind 120 years to repent before bringing the Flood on the earth. By nature God is slow to anger and reluctant to punish His people. To Him real repentance is a far better option. He takes no joy in punishment. Yet at the end of the day His strong sense of divine justice will prevail.

Nonetheless, it was many years after Amos' prophecy before the northern nation of Israel (Samaria) was actually taken into captivity by Assyria. God had generously given the country time and space to repent.

Yet He had warned them well in advance:

"For the LORD God Almighty declares, 'I will stir up a nation against you, O house of Israel'" (6:14).

Many of our readers will already understand that the United States and Britain stand identified today as the house of Joseph or the house of Israel. These two nations are the primary descendants of the lost 10 tribes to inherit the identity of Israel in the end time.

Prophecies yet to be fulfilled

Bible prophecy can be dual in nature. That is, prophetic statements sometimes have more than one fulfilment.

So the prophecies of Amos can easily be dual, foretelling not only God's judgment on the ancient house of Israel, but also His hand of discipline on the modern descendants today. And in principle, the spiritual lessons drawn from the book of Amos apply across the board in today's pulsating world.

Further, Jesus Christ's Olivet Prophecy tells us something very significant about events just preceding the time of His second coming. "For this is the time of punishment [vengeance, KJV] *in fulfillment of all that has been written* [in the Old Testament prophecies]" (Luke 21:22)

Armed with these crucial biblical keys, we are better able to evaluate world and national conditions afflicting our modern times today.

National afflictions of Joseph

The peoples of Britain are among the primary descendants of the patriarch Joseph. Several national trends are far from favorable. For instance, in the words of Yasmin Brown, feature columnist for *The Independent*, "Even we on the Left are shamed by the verbal corruption infecting the nation's bloodstream" (reprinted by the *Daily Mail*, July 17, 2003).

A survey published by Mediawatch UK, which reviews television programs, discovered that in the first six months of this year the "F" word was used more than 1,400 times in TV films shown on British television. Also, "there were more than 1,000 other swear words—all used gratuitously." And according to Ms. Brown, "The general population too, is being given a visual junk diet of soaps, smut and soft porn" on TV, in addition to all the vulgar language.

She asks: "How can we stand by and let the greatest, most versatile language in the world trash itself, degenerating into a pile of offensive sounds?" A very good question!

On another front, a recent Citizen Adult Survey based on some 12,000 citizens in over 100 local authority areas (funded by the Economic and Social Research group) concluded that "only two thirds of people believe that the law should be obeyed as a matter of course" (*The Times*, Aug. 28, 2003). One third of British citizens believe that, in some circumstances, it is perfectly all right to avoid paying taxes.

On yet another level, the British government's chief inspector of schools has stated that "five-year-olds have led disrupted and disheveled lives" (*The Sunday Telegraph*, Aug. 31, 2003). According to this high official, "Verbal and behavioral skills of the nation's five-year-olds were at an all-time low." Small

children seem to have great difficulty sitting still, have little sense of danger, can't fasten buttons, etc.

School officials are attributing this sad set of circumstances to a lack of parental discipline, both parents working out of the home and the almost universal use of TV as a babysitter. (Obviously there are many exceptions, but the numbers are great enough to cause the British government's chief inspector of schools to make this comment in a well-respected major national newspaper.)

Finally in Britain, according to a recent report called *Getting There: Reducing Crime on Public Transport*, "Crime on public transport is scaring people away from traveling on trains and buses . . . [the] Survey finds that one in three people are too frightened of crime to use [these] services" (*The Sunday Telegraph* , Aug. 31, 2003).

Just related to this reporter

The above examples are just a few of many similar news clippings that I have collected in a very short time. Of course, other articles will tell you that Britain is a great place to live—and it is! I am a very satisfied resident!

Yet consider my favourite village in all of England. It is a great place to relax over a cup of coffee and a snack. It offers everything that a journalist like me could possibly wish for: non-smoking coffee shops, the best small bookstore I have ever run across, a newsstand that sells several American newspapers as well as domestic editions, a very good public library, a Bible college with an excellent in-house bookshop—all within easy walking distance of each other.

And yet the proprietor of my favourite coffee shop personally related the following to me. He lives upstairs above his shop and I have known him for several years. Just within the past five days of this writing, one local pub was closed down and its license temporarily revoked for failing to control violent customers, my favourite bookshop was broken into and robbed of 10 days' income, many shop windows have been damaged, etc. I cannot even recall all the incidents he related. The night before he told me of this sad crime spree, he couldn't get to sleep until 3:30 a.m. because of the dreadful noise teenagers were making in front of his shop in the early morning hours.

How much is too much? This is not to pick on Britain exclusively, because manifold similar problems and difficulties are replicated daily in most other nations of our Western world.

The question we must all ask ourselves is this: When will God repeat to Himself about us what He said anciently about the house of Israel through the pen of the prophet Amos—"I will spare them no longer"?

One may conclude that Sept. 11, 2001, was a divine warning to the United States and the Western world in general. The divine protective shield was at least partially withdrawn. On that fateful day, the enemies of America inflicted a grievous national wound (psychological, as well as physical) on the greatest country in the world.

USA Today recently reported that the American crime rate is the "lowest in 30 years" (Aug. 25, 2003, Atlantic Edition). Only the murder rate and the rate of forcible rapes showed an increase, disturbing facts in themselves. Yet one sincerely hopes that the significant drop in several categories of crime reflect that at least some American citizens have reexamined their lives for the better in response to the twin tragedies that befell New York City and Washington, D.C., on 9/11.

Still many serious problems remain in the United States. For instance, the sex industry continues to grind out thousands of porn films, videos and CDs annually—readily available for paying customers of many well-known hotels across America. Sadly, these pornographic films are exported all over the world making the United States a primary source of moral pollution, along with several nations on the European continent.

How much is too much? Once our Creator delayed the punishment of an ancient people, remarking that "the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full." Sadly, the Amorites continued their lethal, lawless way of life and they eventually became the object of God's anger. He acted!

Yet God's mercy and patience is still beyond our human understanding. When will His almost inexhaustible patience finally run out? He grieves over our national sins and longs for His people to repent.

Although the Bible does not enable us to calculate the time of the end, it nonetheless provides the discerning reader with an invaluable insight into when the general season begins.



Archaeological and historical light

Tiglath-pileser III, king of Assyria (744-727 BC)

Assyria's territories were greatly enlarged during the reign of Tiglath-pileser (or Tiglatpileser) III who annexed regions to the west of the Euphrates river and to the east of the Zagros main ridge. In 729 BC, this Assyrian king also seized the crown of Babylon. He seems to have died peacefully of old age and was succeeded by his son and chosen heir, Shalmaneser V (726-722 BC).

This stele shows the storm god who was the principal deity of most of northern Syria, including Arpad. Standing atop his sacred animal, the bull, he is brandishing lightning bolts in both hands. The stele dates to the period of

Tiglath-pileser III and was excavated in the Assyrian city of Hadattu (modern Arslan Tash in Syria).

Assyria's waning hegemony over the Middle East

In the first half of the 8th century BC, Assyria found itself in a precarious situation. With the rise of Urartu in eastern Anatolia, Assyrian supremacy was no longer automatically accepted by its western neighbours, the smaller kingdoms in Syria and Anatolia. The treaties binding these states to Assyria and guaranteeing their tribute for the Assyrian treasury were vulnerable as long as swearing allegiance to Urartu was a realistic alternative.

At that time, Urartu's army was certainly Assyria's equal and in 754 BC, just as Aššur-nerari V (754-745 BC) had ascended to the Assyrian throne, Sarduri II, king of Urartu, defeated the Assyrian army in Arpad, an Assyrian vassal state in northern Syria. This glorious achievement was celebrated in Sarduri's inscriptions and was quite clearly a disaster for Assyria: in the succeeding years, Assyrian troops did not leave the borders of Assyria. Only in 749 BC was a new expedition mounted - not against Urartu but instead to the border with Babylonia where Assyrian interests were now endangered as well.

Tiglath-pileser's rise to power

In 746 BC, a rebellion took place in Kalhu, the main royal residence, and in the following year, Tiglath-pileser III seized the throne. He had certainly supported the revolt against Aššur-nerari V, as had the governors of Assur and Kalhu who were among the very few high officials who remained in power after the coup: the insurrection had clearly started at the very centre of Assyria, with the backing of some of the most senior officials. Many other governors and magnates were replaced, however, probably following their execution after Tiglath-pileser's faction prevailed against those who remained loyal to Aššur-nerari V.

As we have very few archival texts from the reigns of Tiglath-pileser III's immediate predecessors, we do not know under which name he was known before he became king and, crucially, whether he had been the crown prince. But it is certainly significant that Tiglath-pileser never mentions his father in his royal inscriptions even though the ancestor's name is typically invoked in this context in order to stress the king's legitimate claim to the throne. The omission is especially odd as, according to the Assyrian King List Tiglath-pileser was the son of his predecessor Aššur-nerari V. Today, it is therefore generally assumed that, although of royal blood, he was a usurper who took the

Assyrian crown by force after engineering a coup against his ineffective predecessor.

As king of Assyria, he adopted the throne name Tukulti-apil-Ešarra, meaning "my trust belongs to the son of the Ešarra temple". This name refers to Ninurta, the son and heir of Aššur, the head of the Assyrian pantheon. The significance of the name is obscured by the fact that we use "Tiglath-pileser" (or "Tiglatpileser"), a distorted Biblical form of the name, as is always the case when an Assyrian king is mentioned in the Bible: this was, after all, how the knowledge of these rulers survived when the cuneiform script was no longer in use and the memory of the Assyrian empire had faded.

Creating an empire

King Tiglath-pileser in a segment cut from one of the stone panels decorating his Central Palace at Kalhu.

Having established himself on the Assyrian throne, Tiglath-pileser first took the army to the south and decided the situation at the Babylonian frontier in his favour. In 744 BC, he founded two new provinces in the region controlled by the Medes, situated along the important trade route which we know today as the Silk Route: Bit-Hamban, at the headwaters of the Diyala river and Parsua, further to the east in the Zagros Mountains. The news from Assyria indicated a dramatic shift in the formerly ailing state's fortunes and brought the Urartian army, still under the command of the celebrated Sarduri, back to the Euphrates border: in 743 BC, Assyria and Urartu met once again in battle in Arpad. This time, however, the Assyrian troops were victorious and pursued the Urartian army all the way back to the capital, Turušpa.

It can be argued that it was the decade-long experience of Assyrian vulnerability and impotence, when it was eclipsed and threatened by Urartu and had lost its hold over Syria and Babylonia, that caused Tiglath-pileser and his army to initiate the military campaigns in the west which marked the beginning of Assyria's expansion to the Mediterranean coast, deep into Anatolia and the Zagros mountain range and to the Persian Gulf. Only under Tiglath-pileser did Assyria outgrow its traditional boundaries and was it transformed into what we today call the Assyrian empire.

After defeating the Urartian troops in Arpad, Tiglath-pileser went on to punish this kingdom for providing Urartu with access to Syria and to Assyria's frontier. His army waged war in Arpad for three years until all resistance was crushed in 740 BC; Arpad's forces had been assisted not only by the Urartian

army but also the troops of all its Syrian neighbours. When Arpad was ultimately defeated, the Assyrian army did not leave, as in previous centuries: instead, the country was turned into two provinces and transformed into a permanent part of Assyria.

The dogged resistance encountered in Arpad meant that the war could not end if the new Assyrian holdings were to be protected. Although the anti-Assyrian alliance had been driven out of Arpad, it remained in existence and was a powerful adversary. Arpad's neighbour to the west was therefore next in line: its close ally, the influential kingdom of Hamat on the Orontes river. Hamat's troops were first defeated in 738 BC and its north-western parts, reaching the Mediterranean Sea, were turned into Assyrian provinces. During this same campaign, Hamat's northern neighbour on the Mediterranean coast, the Neo-Hittite kingdom of Unqu, was conquered and incorporated into Assyria. But the state of Hamat did not collapse and the fight for its independence continued, assisted by its allies Damascus and Israel. This war was decided in Assyria's favour only six years later, in 732 BC, when the troops of Hamat and Damascus were defeated, their countries invaded and permanently annexed; at the same time, Israel was subjugated and the northern half of the kingdom integrated as the Assyrian province of Megiddo.

Tiglath-pileser, king of Assyria and king of Babylon

During the reign of Tiglath-pileser III, the Assyrian army was transformed into a professional army, with specialised soldiers largely replacing the conscripts who provided military service during the summer months, when the agricultural calendar permitted the absence of farm workers. Soldiers from the defeated kingdoms of Arpad, Unqu, Hamat, Damascus and Israel swelled the ranks of the Assyrian army, supplemented by mercenaries from Anatolia, the Zagros Mountains and Babylonia.

From the beginning of his reign, the Assyrian king had been active in Babylonia: he came to be the archrival of Mukin-zeri, chief of the tribe of Bit-Amukani, who attempted to unite the politically fragmented region under his leadership and assumed the kingship of Babylon in 731 BC. Tiglath-pileser saw this as a provocation and a challenge to Assyria's primacy in the region. He repeatedly led the Assyrian army against Mukin-zeri and ultimately defeated him, taking the crown of Babylon for himself in 729 BC. For the remainder of his reign, Tiglath-pileser ruled both as the king of Assyria and the king of Babylon.

It would seem that most of the income provided by Tiglath-pileser's conquests

was invested in the establishment of the professional army and the maintenance of the new provinces. He certainly did not spend his revenue in central Assyria, where he contented himself with building only a new palace in Kalhu, the so-called Central Palace. The decorated stone slabs which served as the wainscoting for the state quarters of this building provide us with Tiglath-pileser's accounts of his conquests. Kalhu was also the burial place of Tiglath-pileser's queen Yaba, whose tomb was discovered underneath the private wing of the ancient Northwest Palace by a team of Iraqi archaeologists in 1988; she was 30-35 years old when she died and was buried with exquisite funerary goods.

Commentary on the Book of Obadiah

Introduction

Of Obadiah we know nothing but his name, which means “servant of Jehovah.” There are numerous men mentioned in the Old Testament by that name, but it is impossible to identify any one of these with Obadiah, or to trace him. “The silence of Holy Scriptures as to the prophet Obadiah stands in remarkable contrast with the anxiety of men to know something of him. They hoped that Obadiah might prove to have been the faithful protector of the prophets under Ahab; or the son of the Shunamite, whom Elijah called to life, or the Obadiah whom Jehoshaphat sent to teach in the cities of Judah, or the Levite who was selected, with one other, to be the overseer set over the repair of the temple in the reign of Josiah. Fruitless guesses at what God has hidden! God has willed that his name alone and this brief prophecy should be known in this world” (Dr. Pusey) .

Inasmuch as nothing is known of this man of God, nor anything stated under whose reign he uttered his prophecy, the guesses about the time he lived are numerous and very contradictory. The critics have assigned to Obadiah dates removed from each other by above 600 years. We quote again from Pusey’s commentary: “The punishment of Edom the prophet clearly foretells, as yet to come; the destruction of Jerusalem, which, according to our version is spoken of as past, is in reality foretold also. Unbelief denies all prophecy. Strange, that unbelief, denying the existence of a jewel--God’s authentic and authenticated voice to man--should trouble itself about the age of the casket in which the jewel rests. Yet so it was. The prophets of Israel used a fascinating power over those who denied their inspiration. They denied prophecy, but employed themselves about the prophets. Unbelief denying prophecy had to find out two events in history, which should correspond with these two events in this prophet--a capture of Jerusalem and a subsequent judgment of Edom. And since Jerusalem

was first taken under Shishak, king of Egypt, in the fifth year of Rehoboam 970 B.C., and Josephus tells us that in 301 B.C. Ptolemy Lagus treacherously got possession of Jerusalem, unbelieving criticism has a wide range in which to vacillate. And so it reeled to and fro between these two periods, 970 B.C. and 301 B.C.”

Obadiah does certainly not belong to the prophets of the captivity, nor to the post-Exilic prophets. The position given to him in the Hebrew arrangement of the prophetic books bears witness to that. The internal evidence shows that he is one of the earliest prophets, if not the earliest. If we turn to Jeremiah 49:7-22 we find a very striking similarity between the words of Jeremiah and the words of Obadiah concerning Edom. The question is whether Jeremiah used Obadiah's words or Obadiah made use of Jeremiah's message. It has been pointed out that it is a peculiar characteristic of Jeremiah that he often leans upon the utterances of the earlier prophets, and in his writing their thoughts, words and symbols are often reproduced. Compare Jeremiah 47:1-7 with Isaiah 14:28-32; Jeremiah 47:1-7 with Isaiah 15:1-9; Isaiah 16:1-14; Jeremiah 49:1-39 with Amos 1:13-15, etc. When we point out this characteristic of the book of Jeremiah we do not mean to say that this man of God was a copyist, who slavishly copied the utterances of the earlier prophets. He had the books, or scrolls, of the earlier prophets before himself and the Spirit of God led him to use them; thus the Spirit of God repeated through Jeremiah the testimony of his predecessors and confirmed their God-given utterances. Jeremiah knew and possessed the prophecy of Obadiah, so that we can say with certainty that Obadiah is earlier than Jeremiah.

Now, Obadiah in his utterance lays bare the wicked behavior of Edom in a time when Judah and Jerusalem were plundered by hostile forces. The statement of some of the critics that the eleventh verse means only the taking of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar is an assumption. The fact is the prophet does not speak of the destruction of the city, but that Jerusalem was plundered.

Can this historically be located? There can be no question but it must have reference to the time when the Philistines and the Arabs invaded the city in the reign of King Jehoram. Then the Edomites threw off the Judean supremacy 2 Kings 8:20-29; 2 Chronicles 21:8-20. They also planned a great massacre of the Jews who were in the land of Edom at that time Joel 3:19; Amos 1:11. It was then that the treacherousness of Edom and its evil spirit became fully manifested. But there can be no question, as we show in the annotations, that the description of their evil spirit against their kin includes the after history, the fall of Jerusalem under Nebuchadnezzar, the opposition of Edom during the times of the Maccabees and the future revival and doom of Edom. It is, therefore, quite

well established that Obadiah lived and uttered his prophecy during the reign of Jehoram.

Chapter 1

1-9. Edom's destruction foretold

The brief prophecy of Obadiah is composed of two parts: Obadiah 1:1-16 concern Edom and its destruction and Obadiah 1:17-21 reveal the establishment of the kingdom in Israel and Israel's restoration and victory. We shall give brief annotations to assist in the understanding of this prophecy by making a threefold division:

- 1. Edom's humiliation and ruin (Obadiah 1:1-9).*
- 2. Edom's sin against Israel and the day of the Lord (Obadiah 1:10-16).*
- 3. The kingdom of the restoration of Israel (Obadiah 1:17-21).*

Verses 1-4. Dislodged from her mountain fortress

Verses 5-9. Plundered and deserted completely

Obadiah 1:1-9. In order to understand Obadiah's prophecy, Edom's origin and history must be taken into consideration. The Edomites were the offspring of Esau. Of him it was said that Esau the Elder should serve Jacob the younger. The character of Esau was soon manifested and his offspring soon became powerful. In Genesis 36:1-43 we read of the generations of Esau, who is Edom; there the dukes, the national chiefs, are prominently mentioned. Long before Israel had kings, Edom had such rulers, "And these are the kings that reigned in the land of Edom before there reigned any king over the children of Israel" Genesis 36:31. In Exodus 15:1-27 we read of the dukes in Edom being amazed and in Numbers 20:1-29 of the King of Edom. His outrageous behavior towards the kin of Edom is recorded in Numbers 20:14-21. Though the children of Israel promised not to drink the waters in the territory of Edom, or take their fruit without paying for it, Edom refused to give Israel passage; while Israel turned meekly away from Edom. Thus Edom branded itself as the enemy of the people of God. They had an undying hatred against the children of Israel, the sons of Jacob. They had an envious dislike of the people of God. Later it was attacked by Saul and conquered for David by Joab 2 Samuel 8:1-18. During the reign of Jehoram (or Joram) they revolted and gained independence.

When Judah and Israel began to decline Edom became more and more arrogant and rejoiced in the evil which came upon the people of God. Their dwelling place was the former possession of the Horim, a race which lived in caves in the mountainous region, much like the prehistoric cave dwellers on the North American continent. Edom possessed then the so-called troglodyte dwelling places cut into the cliffs of sandstone; these rocky habitations were suited to their warlike character and gave them the shelter they needed. Hence they are mentioned in Obadiah 1:3 as “dwelling in the clefts of the rock.” The ruins of Petra still bear witness to its former grandeur. The wickedness of Edom continued and when the Chaldeans came to destroy Jerusalem they also seemed to have shown their hatred. We read in Psalms 137:7, “Remember, O Lord, the children of Edom in the day of Jerusalem, who said raze it, raze it, even to the foundation thereof.” They were also in evidence during the Maccabean period and later in the person of Herod the Great, an Edomite, reigned in Jerusalem. The judgment pronounced upon Idumea, their dwelling place, has found a startling fulfillment.

But this does not end the story of Edom; there will be a future revival of Edom and an ultimate history. This will be at the close of the age, when the Lord regathers all Israel and Judah and ten tribes will be reunited, then and before Edom will appear once more in prominence. No one knows where and what Edom is today. One might almost surmise that the Turk must have some connection with Edom in his horrible hatred and outrages against the Armenians, who, as it is claimed by some, may contain remnants of the ten tribes. But all this is mere speculation. When God’s time comes the Edomite will manifest their national, undying hatred against the sons of Jacob, but Israel victorious will lay their hand on Edom Isaiah 11:14 .

We read of this future judgment upon the country of Edom, Idumea, in Isaiah 34:5 :

“And all the host of heaven shall be dissolved, and the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll, and all their hosts shall fall down, as the leaf falleth off from the vine, and as a falling fig from the fig tree. For My sword shall be bathed in heaven; behold it shall come down upon Idumea, and upon the people of My curse, to judgment.” It is unfulfilled to the present time, but it will be fulfilled when “the LORD, hath a sacrifice in Bozrah, and a great slaughter in the land of Idumea” (Obadiah 1:6), that is, in the future day of the Lord. As the context shows in Isaiah 34:8, it will be that day, “For it is the day of the LORD’S vengeance, and the year of recompense for the controversy of Zion.” Then comes the utter desolation of Edom Isaiah 34:9-17; see also Ezekiel 25:12-14; Ezekiel 35:1-15; Isaiah 63:3 and Lamentations 4:21-22. While Obadiah’s

prophecy has been partially fulfilled, it awaits its final accomplishment in the day of the Lord.

The prophecy begins with the announcement that tidings had come from the Lord which was heard by the prophet and by the people; an ambassador is sent forth among the nations to summon them to go up in battle against Edom. The hour for Edom's overthrow has come. The Lord has made them small among the nations. It was pride which brought them low so that they would be greatly despised. As the dwellers in the rocks they thought themselves secure and boasted of it by saying, "Who will bring me down to the ground?" But the humiliation of Edom had been decreed by the Lord and no power could arrest its execution. Their nests were high as the eagles, yea, even so high that their habitations seemed to be among the stars, yet the Lord would bring them down. His destruction would be complete; the spoilers would not be like the thieves, who steal till they have enough; or like the grape-gatherers who leave something behind. There would be a clean sweep, everything searched out, even the hidden things. Even those in whom they trusted, with whom Edom made a covenant would deceive them and prevail against Edom. Those with whom they made an alliance and gave hospitality would turn against Edom and prove treacherous, though they had eaten bread with them. Their friends of the heathen nations, whom they stirred up against Israel, would forsake them completely and the Lord would destroy the wise out of Edom and understanding out of Mount Esau. Even the wise men will not be able to help them; their wisdom and understanding will not avail. Teman is mentioned because it was known for its wise men; Eliphaz, who spoke so well to Job was a Temanite Job 4:11). And the prophet Jeremiah in his testimony against Edom wrote, "is wisdom no more in Teman? Is counsel perished from the prudent? Is their wisdom vanished?" Jeremiah 49:7. But now their wise and valiant ones would be cut off by slaughter.

10-14. Cause of Edom's fall

15-21. The Day of the Lord

Obadiah 1:10-16. Her sin of violence against her brother Jacob comes now in special remembrance. On account of it shame would cover them and they would be cut off forever. When Jerusalem was in trouble and the Philistines and Arabs plundered the city 2 Chronicles 21:16-20), they stood on the other side and revolted 2 Chronicles 21:8-20. And more than that, they joined in plundering the city. Thus it was afterwards when the Babylonians came against Jerusalem, Edom rejoiced; they spoke proudly. Perhaps what is recorded in Obadiah 1:12-14 happened repeatedly. They stretched out their hands for the possession of

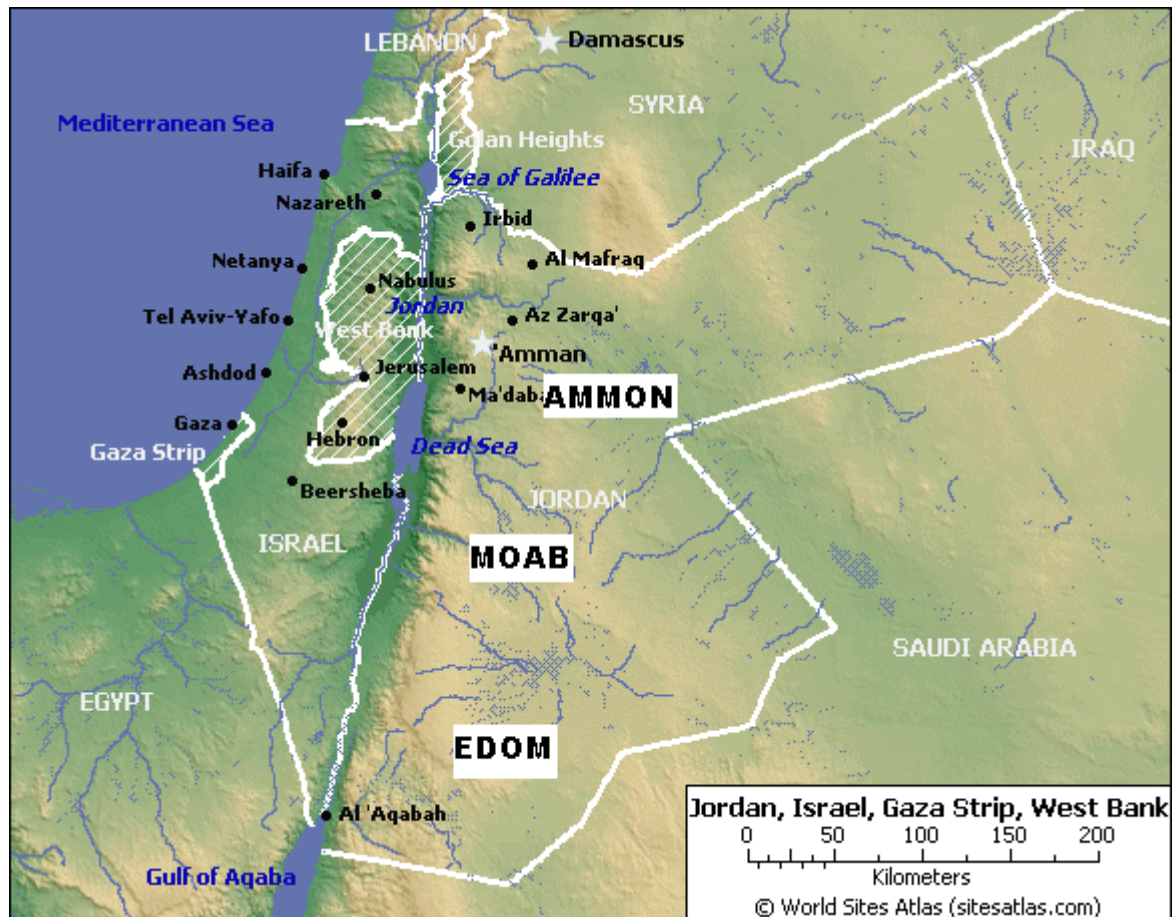
God's people. They placed themselves at the crossroads to cut off the fugitives and delighted to deliver up into the hands of their enemies the remnant which was left.

All this will be repeated once more, when another great prophecy will be fulfilled and Jerusalem is once more surrounded by hostile nations (Zechariah 14:1-21). Not a few superficial Bible students thought when Jerusalem was captured during the war, and all looked bright for political Zionism, that the promises were now being fulfilled. There is coming another siege of Jerusalem, preceding the glorious appearing of the King of Israel, our Lord. That siege is prophetically described by Zechariah. Among those nations will be found Edom once more. Once more they will manifest their malice and hatred against Jerusalem.

Then, to show the link of connection between the future and the past, the prophet announces the day of the Lord. "For near is the day of Jehovah upon all nations." This day has not yet been. There have been judgments upon nations like Egypt, Babylon and others, nations which were nations of power and culture, which have fallen under the dealings of a righteous God; these judgments of the past did not bring that day which Obadiah announced, of which Joel after him so fully speaks. The day of the Lord upon all nations is future. When it comes it will mean judgment for all nations, including Edom, Moab and others named in the Scriptures of Truth; and that day will be immediately followed by an age of blessing and glory such as the earth and race had never known before. It will bring divine retribution. "As thou hast done will they do unto thee." The nations of the earth will have to drink of the cup of His fury and wrath.

Obadiah 1:17-21. The final section of Obadiah's brief prophecy concerns the kingdom, the victory over the enemies and the restoration of His people. Mount Zion will come into its own; there will be deliverance and there shall be holiness. What God had promised to be the remnant of His people will be accomplished, and they will be a holy people and then hold their possessions, all that the Lord in His infinite grace had promised unto them. The house of Esau will be consumed, so that none shall be remaining of Esau, while Israel will occupy Edom's territory.

The saviours mentioned in the last verse of this prophecy (or deliverers) must mean the chosen instruments which go forth to teach all nations and make known the glory of the King in their midst. For "the kingdom shall be the LORD'S."



End Time Prophecy in Obadiah

Obadiah is the shortest book in the O.T. we already know and the least is known about its author. Obadiah was a very common name in those days, and so was its nickname, Obed. Obadiah is a minor prophet but his words were nonetheless striking and powerful.

Through the words the LORD told the prophets to say, we can see clearly that the prophets, minor and major, spoke to all the nations. The prophets were not just speaking to Israel or Judah, they spoke to Edom (Obadiah), to Nineveh (Nahum and Jonah), to the Gentile nations (Zephaniah.) This shows us that God is the God of all nations and peoples.

Obadiah's prophecy is against Edom. Edom is part of what we know today as Jordan. Jordan is comprised of the three tribes of Edom, Moab, and Ammon. Amman is the capital of Jordan today. Edom was the land founded by Esau, the hated twin brother of Jacob. If you remember, Esau despised his birthright and sold it for a bowl of soup. (Gen. 25:29-34). After that, Esau took off and left his brother. (Gen 36:6). Obadiah's prophecy is rife with the reap-sow principle, and what Esau did in despising his Godly birthright will come back to him, heaped

upon his head. "See, I will make you small among the nations; you will be utterly despised." (Obadiah 1:2).

Jacob and Esau, "Jacob I have loved, Esau I have hated." (Romans 9:13) and Malachi 1:2-3 "Was not Esau Jacob's brother?" the LORD says. "Yet I have loved Jacob, but Esau I have hated, and I have turned his mountains into a wasteland and left his inheritance to the desert jackals."

Edom had always fought against Israel, even in the womb, "And Isaac was forty years old when he took Rebekah to wife, the daughter of Bethuel the Syrian of Padan-aram, the sister of Laban the Syrian. And Isaac entreated the Lord for his wife, because she was barren; and the Lord was entreated of him, and Rebekah his wife conceived. And the children struggled together within her; and she said, If it be so, why am I thus? And she went to inquire of the Lord." (Gen 25:20-22). The LORD replied,

"And the Lord said unto her, 'Two nations are in thy womb, and two manner of people shall be separated from thy bowels; and the one people shall be stronger than the other people; and the elder shall serve the younger.'" (Gen 25:23). And so if you ever wonder why there is always so much hatred against Israel, why the Jews and the Arabs cannot seem to get along, it was that way from the beginning. So saith the LORD.

Edom usually lost the battles and was subjugated to Israel, but when Edom wasn't fighting against Israel the nation was laughing and taunting its brother, or joining in with pillaging when it seemed safe to do so. God however is not mocked and Edom's culpability at even standing silent when Israel was raped and pillaged will be judged in the latter days. "On the day you stood aloof while strangers carried off his wealth and foreigners entered his gates and cast lots for Jerusalem, you were like one of them. You should not look down on your brother in the day of his misfortune," (Obadiah 1:11).

And of course, Edom's culpability at performing violence against Israel will also be judged. "Because of the violence against your brother Jacob, you will be covered with shame; you will be destroyed forever." (Obadiah 1:10)

None of this has happened yet. Jordan is certainly not destroyed forever. Recognizing the internal time markers in Obadiah is vital to understanding the prophecy. This little book confirms, not only Edom's part in the confederacy against Israel, but also that the evil alliance is joined at the end time. In Obadiah 1:15, 21, clear indicators of the end time appear:"

"For the day of the Lord upon all the nations is near; as you have done, it shall be done to you; your reprisal shall return upon your own head. . . . Then saviours shall come to Mount Zion to judge the mountains of Esau, and the kingdom shall be the Lord's. The prophecy will begin to be fulfilled in the years prior to the Day of the Lord, and ends as the millennial reign of Jesus Christ commences."

Obadiah's prophecy can be outlined simply as:

Verses 1-4: God's pronouncement of judgment on Edom.

Verses 5-9: How Edom will be annihilated.

Verses 10-14: Why Edom will be annihilated.

Verses 15-16: Edom and the Day of the Lord.

Verses 17-21: Israel's complete triumph over Edom.

The prophecy upon the twins' birth that the elder shall serve the younger is seen in the final days prophecy. (Gen 25:23, Rom 9:12)

Jordan today is one of only two Arab nations to hold a peace treaty with Israel, Egypt being the other. Yet both these peace treaties are fast fading pieces of paper. King Abdullah of Jordan has said more than once he wishes they did not have a treaty with Israel. Just last week in a protest in Amman, protesters called for the scrapping of the peace treaty with Israel.

The elder will serve the younger...this will happen in the Tribulation. Daniel 11:41 says that: "He [antichrist] will also invade the Beautiful Land. Many countries will fall, but Edom, Moab and the leaders of Ammon will be delivered from his hand." Jordan will be a lone nation who escapes conquest of the Antichrist. Why? It is the place that Jesus told the Jews to flee to when they see the Abomination of Desolation: to the mountains. (Mt 24:16). The mountains are the border between Israel and Jordan, and over those mountains is the rose-red city of Petra.

Petra is the city where a single person on a horse or in a small jeep can enter the protected cavern where the magnificent city had been carved from red stone. Its impregnability is one thing that gave Edom its pride in thinking they could never be vanquished. They will be vanquished, and the city will remain impregnable for the fleeing remnant, and thus, Esau's Edom serves the younger brother Jacob in protecting Israel throughout the rest of the Tribulation. The LORD'S word is true!

Obadiah is a study in God's punishment of a people for the things that they have done. They will be made to suffer the consequences of their hostile attitudes and aggression against Israel, as well as their constant attempts to impede the purpose of God through Israel. Yet God's purposes can never be impeded, hallelujah!



Moab stretched as far as the Gulf of Aqaba. (Eilat, Israel, looking across the Red Sea, the Gulf of Aqaba ...)

Archaeological light: Jonah

One of the more interesting books of the Old Testament is the book of Jonah. Children from preschool on study this tale. It is short, shorter than most of my posts (a mere four chapters, 1200 words in the NIV – substantially shorter than this post). It contains foolish disobedience, a great fish, a storm, obedience, repentance, more foolishness ... what more could you want in a Sunday School lesson or as material for a sermon series? Even chapter four, although a little less familiar to many, makes for an excellent lesson. No adventure, but a worm, a foolish prophet, and a message from God about the value of people and his compassion.

The book of Jonah deserves the attention it gets. This is an important book in scripture. The question I would like to raise is not one of value, or of the truth of the message, but one of genre. ***Is the genre of the book of Jonah history or or is it satire?***

The arguments I've heard for the book of Jonah as history are four-fold.

(1) There is no obvious indication in the book that it is not intended as history.

Many feel that the default position should be history except in the presence of direct and incontrovertible evidence to the contrary. The same argument is made for the opening chapters of Genesis and for Job – although I have not heard it made for the Song of Songs.

(2) The book provides details. “*The word of the Lord came to Jonah son of Amittai.*” It uses the names of real places (Joppa, Nineveh, Tarshish).

If it is story, some ask, why did the author use real places or potentially identifiable people? Jonah of Amittai is mentioned very briefly in 2 Kings 14 although he plays no significant role:

In the fifteenth year of Amaziah son of Joash king of Judah, Jeroboam son of Jehoash king of Israel became king in Samaria, and he reigned forty-one years. He did evil in the eyes of the Lord and did not turn away from any of the sins of Jeroboam son of Nebat, which he had caused Israel to commit. He was the one who restored the boundaries of Israel from Lebo Hamath to the Dead Sea, in accordance with the word of the Lord, the God of Israel, spoken through his servant Jonah son of Amittai, the prophet from Gath Hepher.

The same argument was raised concerning the book Job, which specifies a location “*In the land of Uz there lived a man whose name was Job.*” And Job is mentioned in formulaic fashion in Ezekial 14. Some will claim that this rootedness in a historical time and location determines the book as history and precludes other options. The plain sense is preferred.

(3) The only reason to doubt Jonah as history is a desire to sidestep the miraculous element. The creator God is certainly capable of the miraculous.

A justifiable reaction against the attempt of many to remove the supernatural from the Bible. Our faith is rooted in the existence of the supernatural and in the

reality of the resurrection, of Jesus first and of all in the age to come. But the argument for an all powerful God does not make this particular book history rather than satire.

(4) *Jesus refers to Jonah in his teaching.* For some this is the trump that settles the matter.

Matthew 12:38-41

Then some of the Pharisees and teachers of the law said to him, “Teacher, we want to see a sign from you.”

He answered, “A wicked and adulterous generation asks for a sign! But none will be given it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. The men of Nineveh will stand up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and now something greater than Jonah is here.

Matthew 16:1, 4 makes a similar, shorter, allusion – a wicked generation will be given only the sign of Jonah.

Luke 11

As the crowds increased, Jesus said, “This is a wicked generation. It asks for a sign, but none will be given it except the sign of Jonah. For as Jonah was a sign to the Ninevites, so also will the Son of Man be to this generation. ... The men of Nineveh will stand up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and now something greater than Jonah is here.

The context is the same in each reference. The sign of Jonah is found in the fact that he was in the fish for three days and three nights, and yet was returned to the land of the living, so the Son of Man would be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

But it isn’t this simple. The answer to the question of genre is not as easy as these arguments suggest. None of them provide a conclusive argument against the book of Jonah as satire, with a message for the reader even some 2500 years later.

Scholars have some interesting observations placing the book of Jonah in its ancient Near Eastern context. (It is not entirely clear whether Walton views

Jonah as history, and if so how much history he sees in the book. Nonetheless the insight into the ancient Near Eastern context is enlightening.) According to Walton:

In current trends within critical scholarship, Jonah is commonly labeled as **parody** or **satire**. The former typically **lampoons a piece of literature**, while the latter **targets people (specific or stereotyped categories) or events** as Jonah does. Satire can be either an enactment or a written composition in which vice, folly, or incompetence is held up for ridicule. **The closer to reality a satire can be, the more effective it is.** By definition it targets real people and tries to use the mannerisms and words that they use. Satire exaggerates reality, but is based on reality.

Satire and parody are both known in the ancient world and in the Bible. ... In similar ways, most would agree that the book of Jonah wants us to laugh at the prophet's incongruity and senselessness even as we are appalled by his behavior and attitude.

In many respects this addresses the first two objections listed above. A good satire will be intentionally realistic – and the closer to reality, the more effective. If the book is a satire we should not find a clear indication of this for that would negate the satire (**contra argument one**) and we should expect to find realistic details placing the story in time and place (**contra argument two**).

Concerning the fish it is noted that ancient literature refers to fantastic creatures sent from the gods. The epic of Gilgamesh for example refers to the “Bull of Heaven” sent by Anu.

The Bull of Heaven is particularly interesting in that it is sent in response to the hubris of the hero with the intention of teaching him a lesson. Jonah likewise acted against deity (by fleeing) and was subsequently confronted by a cosmic creature ordained by deity. In Gilgamesh the Bull of Heaven is not symbolic or allegorical. It is considered real, but as a supernatural creature would not be classed alongside any standard list of zoological specimens. A similar understanding may be possible for the fish in Jonah.

If the book is satire it will use the forms of the time – and this would include the cosmic creature ordained by deity. This is an accepted form of the day and age. Contra argument three, the reason to see the fish as a

cosmic creature comes not from a desire to remove the miraculous *but from the appreciation of the forms common in ancient Near Eastern literature.*

On the length of time, three days and three nights.

A person is considered truly dead after three days in the grave or in the netherworld. In the Descent of Inanna the goddess goes down into the nether world and tells her servant that if she has not returned in three days, she should lament for her and make petitions to the gods for her return. With this idea in mind, Jonah's three days and nights in the belly of the fish in the realm of death indicates that **Jonah is at the threshold of death.**

The idea of Jonah on the threshold of death also comes in his prayer in chapter 2. The sign of Jonah refers to this return from death after three days in the fish. **Certainly there is no other way in which Jesus is justly compared with the foolish, selfish, and superficial prophet Jonah. Something greater than Jonah is here is quite the understatement.**

To note that as Christians we celebrate the crucifixion on Good Friday (the preparation day before the Sabbath) and the resurrection on Sunday morning (very early in the morning on the first day of the week) so we don't exactly attach great literal significance to the three nights in the heart of the earth. Why then, we insist that the story of Jonah must be history for the allusion to be valid I am not sure. John notes a special Sabbath and thus would likely have three nights, but the church through the centuries has not chosen this chronology, but rather the Friday to Sunday observance.

Chapter four of the book really nails the genre as satire (or parody) in my opinion.

3:10 When God saw what they did and how they turned from their evil ways, he relented and did not bring on them the destruction he had threatened.

4:1-3 But to Jonah this seemed very wrong, and he became angry. He prayed to the LORD, "Isn't this what I said, LORD, when I was still at home? That is what I tried to forestall by fleeing to Tarshish. I knew that you are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in love, a God who relents from sending calamity. Now, LORD, take away my life, for it is better for me to die than to live."

This description of God is practically creedal in the Old Testament ... gracious, compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love. Yet Jonah

takes it as a negative. God doesn't do what any "good" God should [do, by wiping] out the Ninevites [and] destroying their city. Really, **God's compassion is reason to wish for death?** As satire the focus is on the attitude of Jonah, and perhaps by extension all those who prefer to delight in God's wrath and judgment (on others of course) rather than his mercy and compassion.



Tel Aviv – Yafo – Joppa – where Jonah set out

Commentary on the Book of Jonah

Introduction

The question as to the reality of the person of Jonah is answered by 2 Kings 14:25. In this passage we find him mentioned as the prophet who prophesied during the reign of Jeroboam II. His name means "dove," and his father's name Amittai means "the truth of the Lord." He was from "Gath-Hepher"--the winepress of the well is the meaning of these two words. Thus Jonah also belongs to the earlier prophets and the book bearing his name, written by himself, occupies the right place in the Old Testament. A Jewish tradition states that Jonah was the son of the widow at Zarephath, whom Elijah raised to life; but this is only an invention with no evidence whatever.

The Book and Experience of Jonah

The book of Jonah is of a different nature from the books of the other Minor Prophets and their personal experiences and activities as reported in the historical books. The book of Jonah has no direct prophecies in it, yet the experience it records is a great prophecy.

We do not give the contents of the book in this introduction, but shall follow all in the annotations. As is well known, the miraculous history of the book of Jonah has been widely attacked by infidelity. When the Old Testament was translated into the Greek (the Septuagint) heathen philosophers and other writers ridiculed it and made sport with the book. Their objections and ridicule are reproduced in the school of the destructive criticism. We hear that men who boast of great scholarship declare that Jonah never lived, that the story of the book of Jonah is an imagination of some great literary genius. Says that archcritic, Canon F.W. Farrar, in *The Expositor's Bible*: "Of Jonah we know nothing more. For it is impossible to see in the book of Jonah much more than a beautiful and edifying story, which may or may not rest on some surviving legends." But as some one has said, it requires less faith to credit this simple excerpt from Jonah's history than to believe the numerous hypotheses that have been invented to deprive it of its supernatural character. The great majority of these hypotheses are clumsy and far-fetched, doing violence to the language, and doing despite to the spirit of revelation. These infidel inventions are distinguished by tedious adjustment, laborious combinations, historical conjecture and critical jugglery.

Some critics who do not want to reject altogether the story of Jonah, suppose that it may have had some historical basis, though in the form we have it today is fanciful and mythical. Another critic regards it as a dream Jonah had in the ship. Still another critic views the book as an historical allegory, descriptive of the fate of Manasseh, and Josiah his grandson. What wild fancy this critic indulged in may be seen from the fact that he compared the ship to the Jewish monarchy, while the casting away of Jonah symbolized the temporary captivity of Manasseh!

Many critics treat it as an allegory based upon the Phoenician myth of Hercules and the sea-monster. To quote a few more, simply to show what foolish things the darkened mind of man, who thinks he has attained scholarship, can invent in order to disprove the truth of God, we mention the theory that when Jonah was thrown into the sea he was picked up by a ship having for a figurehead the head of a great fish. Another one says that probably Jonah took refuge in the interior of a dead whale which was floating about near the spot he was cast overboard.

The great majority of the critics today deny the historicity of the book of Jonah and claim that its material has been derived from popular legends, that it is fiction with a moral design. The moral lessons and its religious meaning have even a wider range than these hypotheses. The theories do not merit a special refutation.

Is it History or Myth?

There is nothing in the account which would justify any critic to charge it with being allegory. It is cast in the form of a narrative and has all the literary characteristics of a personal experience. The sole reason why the critics have classed it with myths and deny its authenticity is the miraculous element in the book. Any one who believes in an omnipotent God, a God who does wondrous things, will have no difficulty whatever in accepting this book as a true history. We might also add that all the earlier Jewish sources confirm the historicity and literalness of the book of Jonah. Furthermore, the book is very simple and pure Hebrew.

The Highest Evidence

The highest authority that Jonah lived, and had the experience recorded in this account is the Lord Jesus Christ. The words which He spoke, who is the Truth, are plain and unimpeachable. There can be no secondary meaning; "For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the whale's belly, so shall the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and behold, a greater than Jonah is here" Matthew 12:40-50. Our Lord tells us that there was a prophet by the name of Jonah and that he had the experience related in the book which bears his name. To deny this is tantamount to denying the knowledge and the truthfulness of God. This is exactly what sneering critics do. They have even gone so far as to say that if our ever blessed Lord knew better than He spoke, He acted thus for expediency's sake, so as not to clash with the current opinions among His contemporaries. Others boldly say that He did not know, for He had not access to the sources which are at our command today. In other words the destructive critic claims to have more knowledge than the Lord Jesus Christ possessed in His days on earth.

Professor A. C. Zenos (in the Standard Bible Dictionary) says: "The New Testament does not commit Jesus Christ or its own authors to one or the other of the contending theories." This is a poor statement. The Lord Jesus did commit Himself fully to the historicity of Jonah. The New Century Bible, a destructive

work, makes the following declaration: “We are not to conclude that the literal validity of the history of Jonah is established by this reference”--that is, the words of our Lord in Matthew 12:40. But the man who wrote this overlooked the fact that the Lord in all His allusions to the Old Testament events always speaks of them as actual, literal events, and, therefore, establishes their literal validity. For instance, “As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness” ... “As it was in the days of Noah ...” “As it was in the days of Lot.” Then in the next verse in Matthew’s Gospel, the Lord speaks of the queen of the south’s visit to Solomon as a real, literal fact. Why then should He not have spoken of the history of Jonah as a literal fact?

The truth is that the Lord Jesus Christ placed such emphasis upon the book of Jonah because it foreshadowed His own experience as the Redeemer, and because He knew of what apostate Christendom would do with this book and its record. There is no middle ground possible; either this book of Jonah is true, relates the true and miraculous history of this prophet, or the Lord Jesus Christ is not the infallible Son of God. His person and His work stand and fall together with the authenticity of Jonah.

“Our Lord singled out this particular miracle about Jonah, which has been thought of great difficulty, and affixes to it His own almighty stamp of truth. Can you not receive the words of the Lord Jesus Christ against all men that ever were? The Lord Jesus has referred to the fact that Jonah was swallowed by a great fish, call it what you will--I am not going to enter into a contest with naturalists, whether it was a shark, or a sperm-whale or another. This is a matter of very small account. We will leave these men of science to settle the kind (if they can); but the fact itself, the only one of importance to us to affirm, is that it was a great fish that swallowed and afterwards yielded up the prophet alive. This is all one need to affirm the literal truth of the fact alleged. There is no need to imagine that a fish was created for that purpose. There are many fishes quite capable of swallowing a man whole. But the fact is not only affirmed in the Old Testament, but reaffirmed by our Lord Himself and applied to Himself. Any man who disputes this must give an account before the judgment seat of Christ” (W. Kelly) .

The Typical-Prophetic Meaning of Jonah

The typical-prophetic meaning of the story of Jonah is authorized by the words of the Son of God. His experience typifies the death, the burial and the resurrection of our Lord, as well as the gospel message which goes forth to the Gentiles. Furthermore, Jonah’s experience is prophetic also of the entire nation.

The annotations will enter more fully into these interesting and important foreshadowings.

The Division of the Book

The division of the book is very simple. We maintain the chapter division as made in the Authorized Version.

Chapter 1 gives the record of Jonah's commission, his disobedience and the consequences.

Chapter 2 contains his prayer and his deliverance.

Chapter 3 has the account of his obedience in preaching to Nineveh.

Chapter 4 contains the account of Jonah's discontent and correction.

Chapter 1

The Commission of the Prophet , His Disobedience, and the Consequences

1. The commission (Jonah 1:1-2)

2. The disobedience (Jonah 1:3)

3. The consequences (Jonah 1:4-17)

Verses 1-3. The divine call and attempted escape

Jonah 1:1-2. The record begins with the same word with which all historical books in the Bible begin, like Joshua, judges, Ruth, Samuel, etc. The commission given to Jonah was to go to Nineveh, that great city, and to cry against it on account of its wickedness.

Nineveh was the great capital of the Assyrian nation; it is mentioned for the first time in Genesis 10:11. Its great size is mentioned in Jonah 3:3, where we read it was "three day's journey." Ancient Greek and Roman writers state that it was the largest city in the world in that day. All these statements of its enormous size have been verified by modern excavations. The word of the Lord came to Jonah to visit this city and deliver the message. Seven times the phrase "the word of the LORD came to Jonah" is used in this book.

Jonah 1:3. Jonah rose up at once, but instead of going to the east towards Nineveh he fled in the other direction. Tarshish in Spain was his goal. It is also stated that he fled from the presence of the Lord. This cannot possibly mean that he fled from the presence of Him whom he knew as the omnipresent One. The Psalm of David which speaks of this expressly was then in the possession of Israel, and Jonah must have known it: "Whither shall I go from Thy Spirit? Or whither shall I flee from Thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, Thou art there: if I make my bed in sheol, behold, Thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall Thy hand lead me, and Thy right hand shall hold me" Psalms 139:7-24. He did not flee from the presence of the Lord in the sense of escaping His knowledge and authority. It means that he left the land of Israel where Jehovah dwelt; he fled from the service-commission he had received.

If we look for a motive of this disobedient prophet we find it given in the book itself. In Jonah 4:2 we read, "Therefore I fled before unto Tarshish, for I knew that Thou art a gracious God, and merciful, and slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest Thee of evil." But why should he fear that God might be merciful to Nineveh and save the city? It was undoubtedly a national spirit which possessed the prophet. It has been suggested that the prophet knew that the Assyrian would be used by the Lord as the instrument to punish Israel and that he thought if Nineveh would perish the people Israel might be saved. Inasmuch as God might show mercy to Assyria, Assyria would then be used as the rod upon Israel, and for this reason he was disobedient to the commission. But the direct prophecy that the Assyrian would be the staff in the hand of the Lord to bring judgment upon Israel was made through Isaiah (chapter 10), and that revelation had not yet been given, for Jonah lived before the prophet Isaiah. It was rather the fear Jonah had as a Jew that the conversion of the Gentiles might rob his nation of the distinction of being the nation of election, to whom Jehovah had revealed Himself exclusively. He therefore went to Joppa where he engaged passage on a ship which was to bring him to Tarshish, which he never reached. It was at Joppa where centuries later another Jew, who was also jealous for his nation, had a vision which made it clear that the gospel should be preached to the Gentiles. That Jew was Peter Acts 10:1-48.

Verses 4-7. The storm at sea

Verses 8-17. Jonah's witness and fate

Jonah 1:4-17. No sooner had the ship set sail but a terrible tempest arose, sent by the Lord. The danger of shipwreck was imminent. The heathen mariners became terrified and besides crying each one to their gods, they threw the wares

overboard to lighten the ship, so that it might weather the storm. But we do not read anything about Jonah calling on his God. Was it an evil conscience which led him to seek sleep in the sides of the ship? Or did he seek sleep because he was in despair? Or was his action produced by the calmness of faith, that he knew himself in the hands of the Lord? Perhaps his action shows more than anything indifference and an astonishing self security.

The shipmaster aroused him from his sleep, asking him why he slept and demanded that he call upon his God. The lot is cast and it fell upon Jonah. He might have confessed before but he waited as long as he could. The questions they asked him he answers readily. He confesses that he is a Hebrew, that he fears the Lord, the God of heaven, the creator of sea and land. His confession filled them with fear; they also knew that he had been disobedient for he told them about it. It was a noble confession and shows that though he had fled from the presence of the Lord his heart still clung to Him. He answered the question, what shall we do unto thee, that the sea may be calm unto us? by pronouncing his own sentence. "Take me up, and cast me forth into the sea; so shall the sea be calm unto you; for I know that for my sake this great tempest is upon you." Again we must say these are noble words. He is ready to sacrifice himself and trusts the Lord and His mercy. After the mariners made an unsuccessful attempt to row the ship to land, and calling upon the Lord not to lay upon them innocent blood, they cast Jonah into the raging sea, and the sea became calm. As a result the heathen sailors feared Jehovah exceedingly, offering a sacrifice unto Him and making vows, while the Lord prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah, in whose belly Jonah remained three days and three nights. Some have stated that the Lord created a special sea-monster for this purpose, but the Hebrew word does not mean "create", it means "appoint." It certainly was not a whale, for whales rarely ever are seen in the Mediterranean sea, nor can a whale swallow a human being on account of the narrowness of its throat. It was probably a species of sea-monster frequently found in that sea and known by the scientific name *squalus carcharias*, which can easily swallow a human being whole. But the miracle was not that such a fish came up from the depths of the sea and swallowed the prophet, but that Jonah was miraculously preserved in the fish.

The Typical Application

1. Jonah is a type of the Lord Jesus Christ. As already pointed out in the introduction the words of our Lord sanction this application. But as He said when He spoke of Solomon "a greater than Solomon is here," so He also said "a greater than Jonah is here."

We point out a few of the applications and contrasts. Jonah was sent with a message of judgment; the Son of God came with the message of love and salvation. "For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved" John 3:17.

Jonah was disobedient, acting in self-will, fleeing from the presence of the Lord. The Son of God was obedient; He never did His own will but the will of Him that sent Him. The words He spoke were not His own. "The word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's who sent me." He always had the Father set before Himself and was uninterruptedly in His presence.

Jonah, indifferent and self-secure, was fast asleep in the ship while the storm raged and the ship was in danger of going down. The Lord Jesus was asleep in the ship on Galilee, and though the ship was filling with water He was undisturbed, knowing that He was safe. He did what Jonah did not and could not do. He rebuked his fearful disciples and rebuked the wind and the waves; the storm was suddenly hushed.

Jonah bore a faithful witness; but how much greater is His witness. He is called "the faithful Witness" Revelation 1:1-20.

Jonah sacrificed himself in order to save those who were about to perish. But how much greater His sacrifice! Jonah's fate came upon him on account of his sin and disobedience. The Lord Jesus Christ did not suffer for His sins, for He had none, being the Holy, the Sinless One. He died exclusively for others and died for the ungodly. But did Jonah actually die? Did death fasten upon him? Was his body miraculously preserved so that it did not see corruption? Was it a literal resurrection when the fish vomited him out? Jonah did not die physically. But his experience typifies the death and the burial of Christ, and also His physical resurrection. How could Jonah have prayed and cried to the Lord out of the belly of the fish if his physical life had ceased? It was a miracle, however, that Jonah was kept alive.

The three days and three nights have troubled a good many expositors. Not a few teach that in order to bring together the three days and three nights during which our Lord was in the grave, He must have died either on Wednesday or Thursday. The three days and three nights must be interpreted according to Hebrew usage. In Luke 24:21 we read that the two who met the risen Lord said, "And beside all this, today is the third day since these things were done." That was on the first day of the week. Reckoning back, Saturday would be the second day and Friday the first day, the day on which Christ died.

2. Jonah is a type of the Jewish Nation. In the Jewish synagogical ritual the book of Jonah is read on the Day of Atonement. The writer is indebted to an old orthodox Jew for the information why this story is read on their great day of fasting and prayer. He said, "We are the Jonah." Like Jonah the nation was called to bear witness to the Gentiles. And as Jonah did not want the knowledge of Jehovah to go to the Gentiles, so the Jews filled with national pride of being the elect nation opposed God's purposes. (See Acts 13:6-12; Acts 13:44-52; Acts 14:19-28; Acts 17:5-34; Acts 18:12, etc.)

Disobedient as Jonah, the nation left the presence of the Lord. Jonah engaged passage on a merchant-ship, and the Jew became a trafficker. Like as it was with Jonah, storm and disaster came upon the nation after their great act of disobedience, when they rejected Christ, and opposed His purposes. Like Jonah, in the midst of all their troubles they did not deny, nor deny now, their nationality, their faith in God; they also confess in some of their prayers, at least the orthodox Jews, why it is that they are in trouble, that they have sinned and turned away from the Lord.

Jonah was cast overboard into the sea. The sea represents the nations; that is where the Jews were cast. As a result of the casting away of Jonah the heathen sailors turned to the Lord and sacrificed unto Him. In Romans 11:11 we read, "through their fall (the Jews) salvation came to the Gentiles to provoke them to jealousy." The belly of the fish represents the grave of the Jews among the nations. They became nationally and spiritually dead. But as the fish did not digest Jonah, so the nations have not digested the Jew. They remain unassimilated, just as Balaam predicted, "This nation shall dwell alone and not be reckoned among the nations." The national preservation of Israel is one of the great miracles in history, just as the preservation of Jonah in the belly of the fish was a miracle.

Chapter 2

Jonah's Prayer and Deliverance

1. The prayer (Jonah 2:1-9)

2. The deliverance (Jonah 2:10)

Verses 1-9. His prayer of thanksgiving

Jonah 2:1-9. Some expositors have called attention to the fact that the prayer is not one offered up for deliverance, but it is a thanksgiving for the accomplished

deliverance. But this is answered by the opening verse of this chapter, in which we are told that he prayed unto the Lord his God out of the fish's belly. When he found that he had escaped the death he anticipated and that the power of God kept him alive, he realized that the Lord his God would also deliver him; in faith he praised Jehovah for the coming deliverance. His prayer is composed almost entirely of sentences found in Psalms. We give the references. Jonah 2:2 reminds of Psalms 18:6-7; Psalms 120:1. The word "hell" is the Hebrew "sheol," the unknown region. See also Psalms 30:3. Jonah 2:3 contains a quotation from Psalms 42:7, "All thy waves and billows passed over me." In connection with Jonah 2:4 consider Psalms 31:22. Jonah 2:5 is found in Psalms 18:4, except the seaweed which crowned his head as he went into the deep; also Psalms 69:2. The thanksgiving in Jonah 2:6, "Yet hast Thou brought up my life from the pit, O LORD, my God" is closely allied to Psalms 30:5. The first part of Jonah 2:7 is from Psalms 142:3 (marginal reading) and 143:4. The second part is found in Psalms 5:7; Psalms 18:6. The eighth verse reminds of Psalms 31:6 and the ninth verse is to be connected with Psalms 42:4.

The last utterance before the Lord commanded the fish is a triumphant shout, "Salvation is of the LORD," a truth which many preachers in Christendom do not know.

Verse 10. His deliverance

Jonah 2:10. The God of creation manifested His power over His creation by impelling the fish to release its prisoner. The place at which the fish vomited out Jonah is not mentioned; it was probably not very far from the seaport Joppa where he embarked.

The Typical Application

1. As to the Lord Jesus Christ. Our Lord went into the jaws of death and died the sinner's death, the substitute of sinners. Most of the passages from the Psalms which Jonah embodied in his prayer are prophetic predictions of the sufferings of Christ. He cried to God for deliverance and was heard. (See Hebrews 5:7) The answer was His resurrection. Over His blessed head passed the waves and billows of a Holy God, when as the substitute He hung on the cross. He knew more than Jonah could ever know what it meant, "The sorrows of death compassed me, and the floods of ungodly men made me afraid." The Sixty-ninth Psalm is Messianic and the words Jonah used, "I sink in deep mire where there is no standing; I am come into deep waters, where floods overthrow me," tell us of the deep sufferings through which He passed. While Jonah's head was wound

about with the seaweeds of the deep, our Lord bore the crown of thorns, the emblem of the curse, upon His blessed head.

It was on the third day that the fish vomited out Jonah. The third day is marked in the Word of God as the day of resurrection. (See Genesis 1:11-13; Hosea 6:1-11.) On the third day our Lord left the grave behind and rose from among the dead. We quote a helpful paragraph on the question of the three days and nights:

“So our Lord Jesus, though by Jewish reckoning three days and nights in the grave, literally lay there but the whole of Saturday, the Sabbath, with the part of Friday not yet closed, and before the dawn of Sunday. For we must always remember in these questions the Jews’ method of reckoning. Part of a day regularly counted for the twenty-four hours. The evening and the morning, or any part, counted as a whole day. But the Lord, as we know, was crucified in the afternoon on Friday; His body lay all the Sabbath day in the grave; and He arose early on the Sunday morning. That space was counted three days and three nights, according to sanctioned Biblical reckoning, which no man who bows to Scripture would contest. This was asserted among the Jews, who, fertile as they have been in excuses for unbelief, have never, as far as I am aware, made difficulties on this score. The ignorance of Gentiles has exposed some of them when unfriendly to cavil at the phrase. The Jews found not a few stumbling blocks, but this is not one of them; they may know little of what is infinitely more momentous; but they know their own Bible too well to press an objection which would tell against the Hebrew Scriptures quite as much as the Greek.” (Wm. Kelly, Jonah)

2. As to the Nation. The prayer for deliverance and Jonah’s deliverance by the power of God foreshadows the coming experience of the remnant of Israel. There is coming the time of Jacob’s trouble in the closing years of this age. Then a part of the nation will call upon the Lord. Their prayers are also pre-written in the book of Psalms, and when finally they acknowledge that “salvation is of the LORD,” and He appears in His glory, to turn away ungodliness from Jacob, the Lord will bring them out of their spiritual and national death. He will speak to the fish, the nations, and they will give up the Jews. Then comes the third day of their restoration. (See Hosea 6:1-3)

Chapter 3

Jonah Preaching in Nineveh

3. Jonah's renewed commission

1. *The repeated commission and Jonah's obedience* (Jonah 3:1-4)
2. *The repentance and salvation of Nineveh* (Jonah 3:4-10)

Verses 1-4. Jonah's obedience

Jonah 3:1-4. And now after Jonah's death and life experience the Word of the Lord came unto Jonah the second time, telling him to arise and go to Nineveh to preach there what the Lord would command him. And now he is obedient. Jonah arrived in the great city of three days' journey, and advancing a day's journey into it he cried out his message, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown." Following is the objection of higher criticism as to this statement: "If we were reading a historical description the narrative would be full of difficulties. A strange prophet announced the impending destruction as he traveled through the vast city for one day, and the huge population immediately believed and repented. The king, who is not named, heard, put on sackcloth, sitting in ashes. If this were history, Jonah did what no prophet, no apostle, what Christ Himself never did. Never did a day's preaching bring a vast strange city to repentance. But we repeat, it is not history; it is a story with a meaning, an allegory; it is the great announcement that God cares for the heathen world, and calls it to repentance, and whenever men anywhere repent, His compassion is kindled towards them" (New Century Bible). We reserve the answer to the supposed difficulties in this historical account for the typical unfolding of this event.

Verses 5-10. Nineveh repents

Jonah 3:4-10. The people of Nineveh believed God. The news that a strange prophet had appeared with the message of doom must have spread like wildfire and hundreds upon hundreds must have passed it on so that in a very short time it reached every nook and corner of the great city; it reached the palace of the king and the prisoners in the dungeon. That this is real history has been confirmed by archaeology. For just about that time Nineveh was in great trouble and facing a crisis, which made them eager to believe the message and return to God. They evidenced their faith by a universal fast and humiliation before God. The king laid aside his royal robe and humiliated himself as every one of his subjects did. He issued a proclamation to abstain from food and drink, in which

the dumb creation was included. What a solemn time the great city had, when hundreds and thousands humbled themselves and when the lowing and groaning of the domestic animals was heard throughout the city. The people acknowledged all their wickedness and turned away from their evil ways and deeds of violence, expressing the hope of God's mercy. "Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from His fierce anger, that we perish not." And God answered and was merciful to them.

The Typical Application

1. As to the Lord Jesus. Jonah who typifies in his experience the death, burial and resurrection of our Lord, preached the message as one who had been in a grave and came to life out of that grave. In Luke 11:29-30; Luke 11:32, our Lord makes the application: "For as Jonah was a sign unto the Ninevites, so shall also the Son of Man be to this generation ... The men of Nineveh shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it, for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and, behold, a greater than Jonah is here." Christ was not preached as a Saviour to the Gentile world till He had died and risen from the dead. The Greeks who inquired after Him John 12:1-50 received no answer. But the Lord spoke of Himself at that time as the corn of wheat which was to die to bring forth the abundant fruit. Christ died for the sins of His people Israel, "for that nation," but He also died as a member of the nation, from which He came according to the flesh, so that He might rise and become the Saviour of the Gentiles. Christ preached as having died for our sins, buried and risen on the third day, is the true gospel and carries with it the power of God in the salvation of sinners.

2. As to the Nation. The third day is the day of Israel's spiritual and national resurrection. When that day comes converted Israel will be, according to God's gifts and calling, a holy nation, a nation of priestly functions, a kingdom of priests. They are then fit to show forth the Lord and His glory, and to bring the message, not of judgment, but of life and glory, to the nations of heathendom. The statement in the New Century Bible quoted above is quite correct in one particular-- that "Jonah did what no prophet, no apostle, what Christ Himself never did"--that never a day's preaching brought a vast strange city to repentance. And we might add that no preaching today, during this age, can ever bring such results. The case is unique; it never happened again, that a man who was disobedient, who turned against the divine commission, became a castaway, was miraculously preserved and delivered, led a great world city to God and to true repentance. But if we take into consideration the

fact that this true history is a prophecy, all these invented higher critical difficulties vanish altogether. When the nation is reinstated in the land, filled with the Spirit, they will fulfill their calling and go forth in bringing the message to the nations of the world. Then Matthew 28:19 will be accomplished. Then and not before will the world be converted, and all the nations will be joined in the kingdom to Israel, His kingdom people.

And as for repenting Nineveh there came a day of joy and gladness, as animal creation in that city ceased its lowing and groaning, so will come the day of joy and gladness for this poor world, “in that day” when even groaning creation will be delivered of its groans and moans.

Chapter 4

Jonah’s Discontent and Correction

4. Jonah’s reaction to the revival

1. Jonah’s discontent (Jonah 4:1-3)

2. The correction (Jonah 4:4-11)

Verses 1-5. Jonah is angered

Jonah 4:1-3. All that had happened displeased Jonah exceedingly and he was very angry. Did he feel that he had lost his prestige as a prophet, having announced the overthrow of Nineveh, when it did not happen? What he feared had come true; God had been merciful to this great city and they were now enjoying what he considered Israel’s exclusive inheritance. Instead of rejoicing in the great exhibition of God’s mercy towards such a wicked city, he was angry. Like Elijah, in the hour of despondency he requests to die. “Therefore, now, O LORD, take, I beseech Thee, my life from me; for it is better for me to die than to live.” The trouble with Jonah was that he thought only of himself, and, as another has said, “the horrid selfishness of his heart hides from him the God of grace, faithful in His love for His helpless creatures.”

Verses 6-11. The prophet rebuked

Jonah 4:4-11. The Lord God who had been so merciful to Nineveh is now merciful to His angry servant the Prophet. “Doest thou well to be angry?” How great is the patience and kindness of the Lord, even towards them who fail! Jonah leaves the saved city evidently in disgust, and finds on the east side a place where he constructed a booth and sat there waiting to see what would

become of the city. He evidently expected still an act of judgment. Then comes the lesson. The Lord God who had prepared a fish to swallow the disobedient prophet now prepared a gourd to provide a shade for him. This gourd, a quipayon, is a very common plant in Palestine. The Creator whose creation is so wonderful, manifested the Creator's power in raising up this plant, for the relief of His servant, in a sudden manner. And Jonah was exceedingly glad. Then God prepared a worm which destroyed the gourd. When the morning came and the sun beat upon the head of the prophet he fainted, and once more wished in himself to die. Alas! if the prophet had been in the right place before the Lord he would have accepted the gourd as evidence of His loving care, and when the worm destroyed the plant so that it withered he would have equally acknowledged his Creator-God and not have murmured. He might have said with Job, "The LORD gave, the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD." Jonah in his selfish impatience found fault with God. It is still the common thing amongst professing Christians.

And when God asked him, "Doest thou well to be angry for the gourd?" the poor finite creature of the dust answered the Creator, "I do well to be angry, even unto death." Then comes the lesson. Not God, Elohim, the name of Him as Creator, speaks, but it is Jehovah, the Lord: "Thou hast had pity on the gourd, for the which thou hast not laboured, neither madest it grow; which came up in a night, and perished in a night: and should not I spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than six score thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left; and also much cattle?" If Jonah felt pity and was angry because of a small vine he had not planted nor made to grow, should not God with greater right have mercy upon His creatures, whom He created and sustained? Jonah is silenced; he could not reply. The last word belongs to Jehovah, who thus demonstrated that in His infinite compassion He embraces not Israel alone, but all His creation, the Gentile world and even animal creation.

"Most touching and beautiful is the last verse of the book, in which God displays the force and supreme necessity of His love; which (although the threatenings of His justice are heard, and must needs be heard and even executed if man continues in rebellion) abides in the repose of that perfect goodness which nothing can alter, and which seizes the opportunity of displaying itself, whenever man allows Him, so to speak, to bless him--the repose of an affection that nothing can escape, that observes everything, in order to act according to its own undisturbed nature--the repose of God Himself, essential to His perfection, on which depends all our blessing and all our peace" .

About Prophecy in the Book of Jonah

A number of theologians claim that the Biblical prophecies point to the triumph of 21st Century political Israel over its Middle-Eastern neighbours. I think that their interpretation of the Biblical texts is erroneous, but that is unimportant here. What is important is, even if they were entirely correct, and that a particular Biblical prophet did indeed predict a military victory for modern Israel over, say, Iran, this would not mean that either the prophet or the Bible was endorsing this as a good thing, deserving of our support, any more than the destruction of Jerusalem that Jeremiah foretold was viewed as a good thing, worthy of support. On the contrary, as in the historic example, even if it were '*prophesied*', the right thing to do, from a Scriptural point of view, might well be to oppose it.

Biblical prophecy has never been *normative* for people of faith. It is the commandments that are normative. You know the ones - 'love God and love your neighbour'. These are the Divine commands that inform our actions and tell us how we ought to behave towards our neighbours. And it is only on the basis of these commandments that we can construct a Biblically-based foreign policy - on the basis of *love*!

Perhaps I shouldn't be too harsh in judging my theologian brethren for confusing prophesy and commandment. After all, the prophet Jonah himself was guilty of exactly the same confusion.

You remember Jonah, don't you? After his adventure with the big fish, he did end up going to Ninevah and delivering his message: "*Yet forty days and Ninevah will be destroyed*".

.It was a very simple message, and if ever a Biblical prophesy appeared to be a simple prediction about the future, it was Jonah's.

If you made it to the end of the book, you know that Jonah, after delivering his message, found a good vantage point outside of the city and sat there, waiting for the fireworks to begin. Much to his own chagrin, they do not begin. His prediction was not fulfilled. Why not? Because his prophecy had been successful. Do you see the distinction?

Jonah's prophecy was successful, in that it caused people to repent and come back to God. The result was that the city did not need to be destroyed. God is depicted as being very happy about this. Jonah was not.

Read over the last chapter of the book of Jonah sometime if you've missed the details. Jonah treated his prophecy as if he were simply informing people of the inevitable. He fully expected the judgement to happen and believed that it was right and fitting. Indeed, I suspect that nothing would have made Jonah happier than if God had given him the privilege of pressing the button to detonate the fire and brimstone attack upon Ninevah. But it was not to be!

Jonah made the mistake of seeing the destruction of Nineveh as a good thing, simply because he had prophesied it! Thankfully the people of Ninevah knew how to respond to Jonah's words. They repented, which was the purpose of the prophecy all along!

Biblical prophecy is not normative! It is the commandments that are normative.

Confusing the two is not simply a mistake. It is dangerous and can be downright wicked, because when you confuse prophecy and commandment, you run the risk of breaking the commandments for the sake of seeing your prophecy fulfilled.

Let's get specific here:

The oppression of the Palestinian people by the state of Israel in recent years has been horrendous. Between the massacres and assassinations and the daily grind of an apartheid system that treats Israeli Arabs as second class citizens, all the commandments have been broken.

If we look at the situation through the eyes of Jesus - with eyes of compassion and mercy - we cannot but be moved to both pity and anger. Pity for the many who have been victimised - both Palestinians and Jews who have tried to resist the occupation. And anger towards the foreign countries who make the oppression possible - countries that include Australia as well as the US and Europe.

And the saddest part, from my point of view, is that much of this oppression takes place in the name of religion as in Iraq and Syria, and with the blessing of the many parts of Christ's church, because it is all seen as being a necessary part of the great end-time drama, as depicted in the Biblical prophecies. How shameful!

Biblical prophecy is never normative!

Jonah prophesied that Ninevah would fall. Thanks be to God, his prophecy was NOT fulfilled.

Jeremiah predicted that Jerusalem would fall. Oh, what a good and godly thing it would have been had we been able to prevent that from happening!

The fact that something has been prophesied does not mean that such an outcome is a good thing. The predicted events may be things that we should oppose. We need to be guided here by the commandments. The commandments inform our actions, not the prophecies themselves.

Even amongst those who read and understand what I am trying to say, some will not be convinced, but will continue to believe that the Lord Jesus would have us give unilateral support to the State of Israel, regardless of their record of human rights abuse. I accept that. People are complex, and hold to these types of positions for reasons that are often difficult to understand.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ in Jonah's Book of Prophecy

One of the most meaningful prophecy in the Bible concerning the resurrection of Jesus is known as "*the prophecy of Jonah*." It is a emblematical prophecy represented by the three days and three nights that Jonah spent in the stomach of a great fish.

"Now the LORD had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights." (Jonah 1:17).

Jesus explained the prophetic symbolism of this unique event on an occasion when He rebuked the Pharisees for seeking a "*sign*" from Him. By a "*sign*," they meant a miracle that would validate Jesus' claim to be the Messiah.

Jesus took their word and trifle with it by telling them that the only "*sign*" they would be given would be "*the sign of Jonah*." Jesus then explained what He was talking about:

"Then certain of the scribes and of the Pharisees answered, saying, Master, we would see a sign from thee. But he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas: For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth." (Matthew 12:38-40).

Jesus clearly prophesies here, using the example of Jonah, that He will spend three days and three nights in the tomb before His resurrection will occur. This

prophecy, like all Messianic prophecies, had to be fulfilled in the life of Jesus if He truly was the Messiah of God. Jesus emphasized this point Himself after His resurrection when He told His disciples,

"And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me." (Luke 24:44).

But was the prophecy of Jonah really fulfilled in the burial experience of Jesus? According to the traditionally accepted chronology of events, it was not!

The traditional chronology places the crucifixion on Friday morning and the burial on late Friday afternoon. It fixes the resurrection on Sunday morning. Therefore, according to the traditional view, the body of Jesus was in the tomb only one full day (Saturday) and two full nights (Friday and Saturday). Jesus said His body would be in the tomb three days and three nights.

Jesus said all Messianic prophecy had to be fulfilled in Him, and I believe He meant every detail of every Messianic prophecy. Otherwise, it could be argued that He was not the Messiah.

Let us consider the events in the last week of Jesus' life to see if we can find some clues that will solve the problem. Perhaps the best place to begin is with the problem itself. It is rooted in Mark 15:42 where it says that the crucifixion took place on

"..the preparation, that is, the day before the sabbath."

This verse has caused most people to assume that the crucifixion took place on a Friday since the Jewish Sabbath is Saturday. And that assumption has in turn led to the conclusion that the crucifixion had to take place in either 30 or 33 AD because those are the only two years in the general time period of Jesus' death when the day of preparation (14 Nisan on the Jewish calendar) fell on a Friday.

However, a careful study of Jewish calendar practices will show that the assumption that the day of preparation in the year of Jesus' death had to fall on a Friday is no accurate! Such an assumption is based upon our misunderstanding about Jewish feast days. What the church has failed to recognize over the centuries is that the first day after Passover (15 Nisan) is a feast day, or *"high day"* because it is the beginning of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. It is therefore considered to be a Sabbath, regardless of which day of the week on which it falls.

Numbers 28:16-18 states:

"And in the fourteenth day of the first month is the passover of the LORD. And in the fifteenth day of this month is the feast: seven days shall unleavened bread be eaten. In the first day shall be an holy convocation; ye shall do no manner of servile work therein:"

Verse 18:

"In the first day shall be an holy convocation; ye shall do no manner of servile work therein:"

clearly indicates that the first day after Passover, Nisan 15, is to be observed as a Sabbath — and so it has been throughout Jewish history to this day.

The Gospel of John makes it clear that the Sabbath after the crucifixion was not a regular Sabbath. Rather, it was a feast day Sabbath, marking the beginning of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Consider the words of John 19:31 —

"The Jews therefore, because it was the preparation, that the bodies should not remain upon the cross on the sabbath day, (for that sabbath day was an high day,) besought Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away."

Again, the point of all this is that Jesus did not have to be killed on a Friday in order for His crucifixion to precede the Sabbath because there could have been two Sabbaths during the week of His crucifixion, depending on what day of the week the high feast day fell on. If it fell on Saturday, then there was only one Sabbath. But if it fell on another day of the week, as it usually does, there would be two Sabbaths.

Take the year 31 AD for example. In that year the 14th of Nisan, the Passover day on which Jesus would have been crucified, fell on Wednesday, (April 25th. on our calendar) The next day, Thursday, would have been the high feast day, and therefore it would have been a Sabbath.

Therefore, if Jesus was crucified in the year 31, He would have been crucified on Wednesday and buried that evening (just before or right at sunset) before the high feast day Sabbath began. His body would have remained in the tomb for three days (Thursday, Friday and Saturday) and three nights (Wednesday, Thursday and Friday), just as He predicted. That means His resurrection would

have taken place on Saturday evening, (At sunset or right after) on 17th of Nissan or (April 28th. On our calendar). To the Jew, that would place the Lord's resurrection on Sunday, the first day of the week, because the Jewish day begins at sundown.

There is a clue in the Scriptures that the crucifixion week had two Sabbaths. In Mark 15:47 we are told that Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James remained at the tomb after Jesus had been buried. In Mark 16:1 it says that the two of them bought spices to anoint the body of Jesus after the Sabbath was over.

"And when the sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, had bought sweet spices, that they might come and anoint him."

But in Luke 23:56 it says they bought the spices before the Sabbath and then rested on the Sabbath before proceeding to the tomb on Sunday morning.

"And they returned, and prepared spices and ointments; and rested the sabbath day according to the commandment."

There seems to be only one explanation of the apparent contradiction in these verses. After resting on the high day Sabbath on Thursday, the ladies bought the spices on Friday and then rested again on the regular weekly Sabbath on Saturday before proceeding to the tomb on Sunday morning. This explains how they could have bought the spices both before and after the Sabbath. They bought them after the high Sabbath on Thursday but before the regular Sabbath on Saturday.

Another point of controversy about the resurrection week concerns the nature of the Lord's last supper with His disciples. The church has traditionally taught that this was the Passover meal. But the scriptures clearly indicate that the meal was eaten the evening before Passover.

Jesus was crucified on the day of preparation for the Passover. In fact, He died at three o'clock in the afternoon at the precise moment that the Passover lambs were being slaughtered for the Passover meal that evening (Matthew 27:45-46). Jesus and His disciples had eaten their last meal together the evening before Passover. Yet, Jesus referred to His last meal with His disciples as ***"keeping the Passover"*** (Matthew 26:18). So, it must have been a Passover meal that was celebrated one evening early.

Let me propose a solution to this problem. There is evidence that the Galilean Jews reckoned time differently from the Judean Jews. Whereas the Judean Jews counted a day from sunset to sunset, the Galilean Jews counted a day from sunrise to sunrise. If this is true, then Jesus and His disciples, being Galileans, would have celebrated Passover one evening earlier than their Jewish brethren in the Jerusalem area.

A Summary of the Order of Events Regarding the Death, Burial and Resurrection of Jesus in 31 AD:

1. Jesus and His disciples ate the Passover meal on a Tuesday evening (Nisan 13) in the Upper Room on Mount Zion.
2. After the Passover meal, Jesus and His disciples departed the Upper Room and walked to the Garden of Gethsemane in the Kidron Valley between the Old City and the Mount of Olives
3. Jesus was betrayed and arrested early Tuesday evening. His various trials lasted throughout Tuesday night and early Wednesday morning
4. Jesus was crucified at about 9:00 am on Wednesday morning (Nisan 14). At noon, darkness filled the land. At about 3:00 p.m. Jesus died.
5. Jesus was buried on Wednesday at sunset.
6. The two Mary's waited until after the high Sabbath on Thursday (Nisan 15) to purchase the spices for the anointing of Jesus' body. They bought the spices on Friday (Nisan 16) and then rested again during the regular Sabbath on Saturday (Nisan 17) before returning to the tomb on Sunday morning (Nisan 18).
7. The resurrection of Jesus occurred on Saturday evening at six o'clock, sundown. The resurrection was discovered on Sunday morning when the women returned to the tomb.
8. Jesus was in the grave exactly three days and three nights as Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.

What Difference Does It Make?

Lest you be tempted to write all this off as much ado about nothing, let me explain why I think it is important. Prophecy and its fulfillment validate Jesus as who He said He was — namely, God in the flesh. Prophecy and its fulfillment

also validate the Bible as the inspired Word of God. Prophecy must be fulfilled precisely, not approximately.

The precise fulfillment of prophecy regarding the First Coming of Jesus is our assurance that all the prophecies regarding His Second Coming will also be fulfilled completely to the last detail. God will not forget or overlook anything. He is true to His Word. He keeps His promises.



Ancient City Nineveh

Commentary on the Book of Micah

Introduction

When the prophet Jeremiah was in danger of being put to death for his faithful testimony, certain of the elders rose up and said, “Micah the Morasthite prophesied in the days of Hezekiah, King of Judah; and spake to all the people of Judah, saying, Thus saith the LORD of hosts: Zion shall be plowed like a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps, and the mountain of the house as the high places of a forest” Jeremiah 26:18. This is the testimony of the book of Jeremiah to Micah, who prophesied under the reign of Hezekiah, as well as Jotham and Ahaz. The first verse of the book of Micah gives us this information. While Jonah was a Galilean, Micah was a Judean. He came from Moresheth-Gath, which distinguishes him from another prophet of the same name, Micah the son of Imlah. (See 1 Kings 22:8; Micaiah is the same as Micah.) The name Micah means “who is like the LORD?”

Prophesying mostly in Jerusalem during the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, he was contemporaneous with Isaiah. Though his name is not mentioned in the prophecy of Isaiah, his message is the same as the message of Isaiah, in describing the moral corruption of their times, and the Messianic prophecies. The following passages will confirm this: Micah 1:9-16 and Isaiah 10:28-32; Micah 2:1-13 and Isaiah 5:8; Micah 2:6; Micah 2:11 and Isaiah 30:10-11; Micah 2:12 and Isaiah 10:20-23; Micah 3:5-12 and Isaiah 29:9-12; Micah 3:12 and Isaiah 32:14; Micah 4:11 and Isaiah 2:2; Micah 4:4 and Isaiah 50:19; Micah 4:7 and Isaiah 9:7; Micah 4:10 and Isaiah 39:6; Micah 5:2-15 and Isaiah 7:14; Micah 5:6 and Isaiah 14:25; Micah 6:6-16 and Isaiah 58:6-7; Micah 7:7 and Isaiah 8:17; Micah 7:12 and Isaiah 11:11.

Thus the Lord gave the same witness through the mouth of these two. Of course Isaiah was the leading figure. But Micah did not copy him, but as the Holy Spirit came upon him he uttered his prophecies bearing witness to the same truths Isaiah had spoken. The style of Micah’s writings is different from the style of Isaiah. “This may be all explained by the vivacity of his own individuality, and the excited state of his mind, passing as he does rapidly from threatening to promise, from one subject to another, and from one number and gender to another.” But his words are never deficient in clearness, while in other respects he comes quite near to the style of Isaiah.

The prophetic horizon of Micah is very much restricted. The magnificent sweep of Isaiah, looking forward to the great and glorious consummation in the kingdom, is lacking in Micah. The question of the exact time when Micah

uttered his prophecies, what was spoken during the reign of Jotham, during the reign of Ahaz or Hezekiah, is unessential, and we do not follow it in this introduction.

His Message

The book consists of three great prophetic discourses which all begin in the same way, with the command to hear. "Hear all ye people," Micah 1:2, the first discourse. The second discourse, Micah 3:1, "Hear, I pray you." The third discourse, Micah 6:1, "Hear ye now what the LORD saith." In the first prophetic message he predicts the destruction of Samaria, the ten-tribe kingdom, and the captivity of Judah. The second message is a message of reproof of the leaders of the nation, the heads of Jacob and the princes of the house of Israel, followed by a denunciation of the false prophets. This is followed by the vision of the coming glory in the last days and the restoration of Israel. In this second discourse the coming ruler of Israel and His birthplace are announced; what He is and the kingdom He will establish in the midst of His people. Here is the message of hope and glory.

The third discourse contains a very solemn pleading with His people. Jehovah tells them again of all His loving kindness. He tells them He has a controversy with them; He speaks to them of His rightful demands. It is a most eloquent outburst. The last part contains an assurance that the Lord will surely have compassion upon His people, while their enemies will be overthrown to lick the dust. One of the greatest words of praise in the Scriptures is found in the last three verses. It contains Israel's hope and is a prophecy of the time when the Redeemer shall return and turn away ungodliness from Jacob and remember their sins no more.

The three prophetic discourses of Micah the Morasthite give a progressive message. The book begins with the threatening judgment; it leads on towards the Messianic salvation and glory, and finally the exhortation and reproof--to return unto Him, to repent, and the assurance of His compassion and forgiveness.

THE FIRST PROPHETIC MESSAGE

Chapter 1

1. Judgment upon Samaria and Judah

1. The introduction (Micah 1:1)

2. Judgment announced (Micah 1:2-5)

3. The destruction of Samaria (Micah 1:6-7)

4. The lamentation of the prophet over the coming judgment (Micah 1:8-16)

Verse 1. Introduction

Micah 1:1. This introduction tells us two things. In the first place, we learn that this book contains the word of the Lord that came to Micah, the Morasthite; in the second place, we are told when Micah exercised his office. As stated in the introduction, he was contemporary with Isaiah, probably for about twenty-nine years. Criticism has attacked the authorship of this book also. Since criticism began, with Ewald, to question the unity of this little book, it has raged with increasing violence, until Professor Cheyne, improving on Robertson Smith in the Encyclopedia Britannica, concludes: "In no part of chapters 4-7 can we venture to detect the hand of Micah." There is no need to answer such statements. The unity of the book of Micah is fully demonstrated by the message it contains. If chapters 4-7 were not written by Micah, will the critics give us light on who the author is?

Verses 2-7. Judgment upon Samaria

Micah 1:2-5. The opening message is sublime, it is an appeal to all the nations, the whole earth and all that is in it, to listen to the witness of the Lord Jehovah against them, the witness which comes from His holy temple. The other Micah (Micaiah, the same as Micah) the son of Imlah, uttered similar words 1 Kings 22:28. He next describes the Lord coming out of His place, the place where He dwells in mercy, to come down and tread upon the high places of the earth. He is coming to judge; He is coming in wrath. The nations are to hear it, that the judgment is for the transgression of Jacob and for the sins of the house of Israel. On Micah 1:4 see Psalms 18:7-10; Psalms 68:8 and 5:4. The near fulfillment was the double judgment which came upon the two kingdoms, the kingdom of the ten tribes, Samaria, and the kingdom of Judah. But the description of the

coming of the Lord in judgment also relates to that great future event, the day of the Lord.

Micah 1:6-7. The sin of Israel was Samaria, it originated there and consisted of idol worship; the sins of Judah were the high places in Jerusalem. (See Jeremiah 32:35.) Complete destruction of Samaria would come with this announced judgment and all her graven images would be broken to pieces, and her whoredoms burned with fire Joel 2:3; Hosea 2:7.

Verses 8-16. Lamentation over Samaria and Judah

Micah 1:8-16. Here is the lamentation of Micah as directed by the Spirit of God, not only over the fate of Samaria, but over Judah as well. He weeps for both Samaria and Judah. “I will wail and howl; I will go stripped and naked; I will make a wailing like the jackals, and a mourning like the owls (ostriches).” It shows how these men of God entered in a whole-souled manner into the divine revelations they received. It created deep soul exercise. This must be the result of faith in the prophetic word with all His people at all times. In verse nine (Micah 1:9) the prophet speaks of one who comes to execute the threatened judgment. “He is come unto the gate of my people, even to Jerusalem.” This enemy is the Assyrian whom Micah beholds advancing and who came before the gates of Jerusalem. (See Isaiah 10:1-34.) The Assyrian was used in ending the kingdom of Israel; Babylon under Nebuchadnezzar was the instrument used against Judah and Jerusalem. Sennacherib came against Jerusalem, but it was Shalmaneser, king of Assyria, who carried Israel away into captivity. Isaiah’s prophecy enters more fully into this. He describes both the Assyrian and the Babylonian power. And both will appear again at the close of the times of the Gentiles. The little horn of Daniel’s prophecy in chapter 7, the head of the confederated nations, the revived Roman Empire, corresponds with the final King of Babylon, while the final Assyrian is the other little horn in Daniel 8:1-27. (See annotations on Daniel 7:1-28; Daniel 8:1-27) .

Micah 1:10-13 correspond to Isaiah 10:28-34; it is a description of the advance of the Assyrian. The coming disaster is not to be published in Gath, that is, the Philistines are not to hear of it. (See 2 Samuel 1:20.) There is a remarkable play of words in these statements. It may be literally rendered as follows: “Weep not in Weep-town; in Dust-town (the meaning of Aphrah) roll thyself in dust”; then a contrast, “in Beauty-town (Saphir means beauty) be in nakedness and shame; and in March-town (the meaning of Zaanen) march not forth.”

The inhabitant of Maroth waited anxiously for good, but evil came from the LORD unto the gate of Jerusalem (Maroth means bitterness). In the Assyrian

cylinder, known as Taylor's cylinder, Sennacherib mentions the great gate of Jerusalem.

Then follows a call to Lachish to escape. "Bind the chariot to the swift beast." Lachish was a fortified city, as the excavations have shown, and was taken by Sennacherib. Here is still another play of words in the original. Lachish means "Horse-town," so that it can be translated "Bind the chariot to the horse, O inhabitant of Horse-town." It has been suggested that the sin mentioned in connection with Lachish was that "the horses of the sun" in connection with idolatry were kept there 2 Kings 23:11).

In Micah 1:14 the prophet mentions his home town Moresheth-gath; there is to be a parting gift for she shall go into captivity. And Achzib will not keep the invader back; Achzib means a lie--the "Lie-town" shall be a lie to the kings of Israel, a false hope.

The heir who is to possess Moreshah is the Assyrian, and "the glory of Israel shall come even unto Adullam," the nobles of Israel shall gather in the cave of Adullam, like outcasts. (See 1 Samuel 22:1.)

They were now to mourn, expressed in making themselves bald Job 1:20; Isaiah 15:2; Isaiah 22:12; Jeremiah 16:6), for they are gone into captivity.

Chapter 2

2-3. Judgment upon various classes

1. The guilt and punishment of Israel (Micah 2:1-11)

2. The future restoration (Micah 2:12-13)

2:1-11. The leaders of Samaria and Jerusalem misled

Micah 2:1-11. In the first two verses the special sins of Israel are mentioned, the same as in Amos--idolatry, covetousness and oppression. Therefore punishment is to fall upon them. There would be a doleful lamentation: "We be utterly spoiled: he changeth the portion of my people; how does he take it away from me!" Their fields would be divided. Nor did they listen to the true prophets; they gave ear to the false prophets who flattered them. It is interesting to note that the sentence, "Prophecy ye not, thus they prophesy," literally translated is, "Do not sputter, thus they sputter." They did not give out the real message, but they sputtered out their own words. These false prophets tried to prevent the true prophets from announcing the judgment of the Lord.

Then comes a passionate appeal: “O, thou that art named the house of Jacob, is the Spirit of the Lord straitened? Are these His doings? Do not my words do good to him that walketh uprightly?” He still appeals to their consciences. The Spirit of God does not change, nor was it His doings, when the nation drifted into idolatry and judgment was impending. Still, if they but walked uprightly His words would surely do them good. But they had risen as an enemy against Him; and yet the Lord, in spite of all, called them “My people.”

2:12-13. Mercy upon a remnant

Micah 2:12-13. In this prophecy Christ is announced as the Breaker, the One who goes before them, clears the way, and removes every obstacle out of the way. In Micah 2:10 we read, “Arise ye, and depart; for this is not your rest.” The true rest for His people Israel comes when the King comes and brings with Him the promised blessing and glory. Then the remnant of Israel will be gathered, “and their king shall pass before them, and the Lord at the head of them.” It is a great prophecy of the ultimate restoration of Israel. “We must not exclude all allusion to the deliverance of the Jewish nation out of the earthly Babylon by Cyrus; at the same time, it is only in its typical significance that this comes into consideration at all, namely, as a preliminary stage and pledge of the redemption to be effected by Christ.”

THE SECOND PROPHETIC MESSAGE

Chapter 3

- 1. Address to the godless princes and judges (Micah 3:1-4)*
- 2. Address to the false prophets (Micah 3:5-8)*
- 3. The verdict of judgment (Micah 3:9-12)*

3:1-12. Demonstration of various classes

Micah 3:1-4. The second prophetic message of Micah contains the great Messianic prophecies. But first the prophet gives a description of the degradation of the nation, the moral corruption of the leaders and judges, as well as the false prophets. It is all summed up in one sentence, “who hate the good, and love the evil.” The princes and judges robbed the people, treated them like cattle (Micah 3:3). For these unjust deeds the Lord would not hear them when they cried in the hour of their need, and would hide His face from them.

Micah 3:5-8. The false prophets were mostly responsible for these abominations, just as today the false in Christendom, the deniers of the faith, destructive critics and others, are responsible for the conditions in the professing Church. They make the people err. While they bite with their teeth, that is, being fed, they cried “peace” to their patrons; and those who did not support them, by putting food in their mouths, they fought and denounced. There would be night for them, with no vision; darkness would come upon them. They would be ashamed and confounded; the covering of the lips was a sign and emblem of mourning and silence. Such will be the fate of all false prophets and teachers.

The eighth verse (Micah 3:8) is a magnificent outburst of God’s true prophet, Micah’s confession. As the true prophet he was full of power by the Spirit of the Lord, and thus filled he declared unto Jacob his transgression and to Israel his sin.

Micah 3:9-12. What Micah had announced in the preceding verse he does now. He tells the heads and rulers that they build Zion with blood and Jerusalem with iniquity. He speaks of the influence of money. judges acted for reward, priests taught for hire, and prophets prophesied for money. The verdict of judgment is mentioned in Jeremiah 26:18. This prophecy was fulfilled when Babylon conquered Jerusalem. And when finally the returned remnant rejected the Lord of Glory, their King, Zion and Jerusalem became once more heaps, as he announced, “Jerusalem shall be trodden down by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.”

Chapter 4

4. The establishment of Messiah’s kingdom

- 1. The future of glory (Micah 4:1-5)*
- 2. The restoration and the final victory (Micah 4:6-13)*

Verses 1-5. Character of the kingdom

Micah 4:1-5. The last verse predicted the long desolation and ruin of Zion. This is followed at once by a great prophecy of the future of glory in store for Zion. Isaiah also uttered this great prediction. Not that Micah copied Isaiah, nor Isaiah Micah, but the same Spirit gave to the men the same prophecy. It concerns the latter days, which means the coming of Messiah’s kingdom on earth. These days are not yet here. To apply these words, even in a spiritual way, to the present age, or to the Church, is a serious mistake. The house of the Lord is not the Church, but the house in Jerusalem, to which in the kingdom the nations will

come to worship the Lord of hosts. The nation will be judged and rebuked by Him whose glorious throne will be established in Jerusalem. Then, and only then, comes the time of universal, world-wide peace. How blind Christendom is in not seeing in what connection the favored text concerning peace on earth stands! It will be “in that day” when “they shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks.” The prediction of our Lord that throughout this age, down to its end, nation would lift up sword against nation, is then ended, and another order of things begins; for then “nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.” What peace and prosperity will then follow! It is described in the fourth verse, “But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree; and none shall make them afraid: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it.”

Verses 6-13. Establishment of the kingdom

Micah 4:6-13. The re-gathering of all Israel then takes place. Not the boasting, proud, infidel, portion of the nation as it is today. Reform Judaism and the other apostates in the nation will suffer judgment in the future as they did in the past. But there is a feeble, God-fearing remnant, and to that remnant belong the promises. “In that day, saith the LORD, will I assemble her that halteth, and I will gather her that is driven out, and her that I have afflicted.” In His grace He will make the remnant a strong nation and reign over them in the established kingdom. To Zion shall return “the first dominion,” that is, the reign and power and glory that was manifested in the monarchy under David and Solomon; only it will be greater than David’s or Solomon’s kingdom.

All this is preceded by her sorrow and captivity. It must be noticed that Micah 4:10 goes beyond the Babylonian captivity, for it could not be said that the Lord redeemed in that past captivity Israel from the hands of her enemies. Nor was it true then that many nations were gathered against her. The Babylonian captivity is a type of the greater dispersion throughout this present age. When it ends, as it will end, the Lord will then redeem His people and deal in judgment with the opposing nations which finally gather against Jerusalem. (See the annotations of the last chapters of Zechariah.) He gathers the nations for the harvest time, when the sheaves are to be threshed. The daughter of Zion is to trample on them and beat them, and the grain, the riches of the Gentiles, will be consecrated unto the Lord. In connection with Micah 4:11-13 the following Scriptures should be read and studied with the annotations: Joel 3:1-21; Ezekiel 38:1-23; Zechariah 12:1-14.

Chapter 5

5. The first and second advents of Messiah

1. *The siege and the smitten judge* (Micah 5:1)
2. *The smitten judge: Who he is* (Micah 5:2)
3. *The events of the future:* (Micah 5:3)
4. *The Rejected One, the Shepherd of Israel* (Micah 5:4-6)
5. *The remnant of Jacob and the kingdom* (Micah 5:7-15)

Verse 1. Prospect and retrospect

Micah 5:1. This interesting chapter presents difficulties, but they all vanish if we view all in the light of the future as revealed in the prophetic Word. Here it is necessary to divide the Word of Truth rightly, or we shall never find our way through this great Messianic chapter. The daughter of troops gathers herself in troops to besiege Jerusalem. It is the Assyrian army gathering before the city. But it is not the Assyrian of the past, whose invasion both Isaiah and Micah describe prophetically, but it is the Assyrian of the future, the great troubler which invades the land of Israel at the end-time, the time of Jacob's trouble, the great time of travail and final deliverance. This last invader, the king of the north (see Joel 2:1-32), besieges Jerusalem. And the reason of it all, their long history of trouble, culminating in the great tribulation, is the rejection of the judge of Israel. It is the Messiah, our Lord. They despised Him, insulted Him, smote Him with a rod upon the cheek. He is called the judge of Israel, because the judge held the highest official position in Israel; the king of Israel held this office. The smiting upon the cheek was considered the greatest disgrace; thus Zedekiah smote the prophet Micaiah upon the cheek and asked him, "Which way went the Spirit of the LORD from me to speak to thee?" (See 1 Kings 22:24 and Matthew 26:67-68). In Job 16:10 we read Job's complaint, "They have gaped upon me with their mouth, they have smitten me reproachfully upon the cheek; they have gathered themselves together against me."

Verse 2. His first advent and rejection

Micah 5:2. This great verse is a parenthetical statement, giving a description of the judge of Israel. It shows forth Him who is to be the Ruler and the Judge, the Redeemer and the King. It is the passage which the chief priests and the scribes quoted to wicked Herod, when he demanded to know where Christ should be

born Matthew 2:4-23. This great prophecy was therefore known when our Lord was born to predict the birth of the Messiah, in fact, the Jews always believed this. But after He was born and lived among them and was rejected by them they attempted deliberately to explain it away, and invented fables to accomplish this. It was Tertullian, and other prominent teachers of the early Church, who argued with the Jews, that if Jesus was not the promised Messiah, the prophecy given by Micah could never be fulfilled, for none of David's descendants was left in Bethlehem.

But here is more than an announcement of the birthplace of Christ. We have a wonderful description of His Person. He is to be the Son of David, coming out of David's city, destined to be the Ruler in Israel. But He is more than a descendant of David, "His goings forth have been of old, from everlasting." Even this plain announcement has not been left unattacked by the infidel critics. Dr. R.F. Horton in his comment on this passage says the following: "We are not called on to explain away this wonderful and solemn forecast, especially when we have seen it in the Babe of Bethlehem, who came into the world out of the bosom of the Father. Micah could not understand his own deep saying; but how foolish of us to discredit it when history has made its meaning plain."

Here we have His deity fully revealed as well as His humanity; He is the God-Man. In this passage Micah's testimony harmonizes with Isaiah's in Isaiah 9:6-7.

Verse 3. Intervals between the advents

Micah 5:3. The meaning of this verse becomes plain if we connect it with the first verse and treat the second verse as a parenthesis. They smote the judge of Israel upon the cheek, they rejected the Lord of Glory, and as a result God gave them up. "Therefore will He give them up, until the time when she that travaileth hath brought forth; then the remnant of His brethren shall return to the children of Israel." It is often applied to the birth of Christ and connected with Revelation 12:1-17, the birth of the man child. There can be no question that the manchild in the chapter of Revelation is Christ, and the woman described is Israel; but its exegetical meaning is in connection with the last days, when Israel will be in travail pains to give birth to the remnant, so prominently mentioned in prophecy. Since the nation rejected the Messiah they have had nothing but suffering, but the great travail pains come in the future. "For thus saith the LORD: We have heard a voice of trembling, of fear and not of peace. Ask ye now, and see whether a man doth travail with child? Wherefore do I see every man with his hands on his loins, as a woman in travail, and all faces are turned into paleness? Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it, it is even the

time of Jacob's trouble, but he shall be saved out of it." Jeremiah 30:5-24). That godly remnant turning then to the Lord, born in that future travail, are called here "His brethren." They are the same of which our Lord spoke in the description of the judgment of nations, which He executes when sitting upon the throne of His glory. (See Matthew 25:31.) That remnant will resume their place as and with Israel, not becoming a part of the true Church, which is then no longer upon the earth, but having all the earthly Jewish hopes realized in the kingdom, of which they are the nucleus.

Verses 4-6. The second advent

Micah 5:4-6. This refers to His second coming. He will stand and feed in the strength of Jehovah, for He is the LORD and they (saved Israel) shall abide. Yea, more than that, "He shall be great unto the ends of the earth."

How beautiful is the opening sentence of the fifth verse! "This Man shall be peace (or our peace)." Of Him Isaiah spoke, too, as "the Prince of Peace," and that "of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end." David in his great prophetic psalm (Psalms 72:7) concerning these coming days speaks of "abundance of peace." Zechariah likewise in predicting the future says, "He shall speak peace to the nations" Zechariah 9:10. He made peace in the blood of His cross and for all who trust in Him He is peace, "for He is our Peace."

Here it concerns the peace He has and gives to His restored people Israel. He will be the peace for them, when the Assyrian, the king of the north, enters their land, and by His power will strike down the invader. Who are the seven shepherds and the eight principal men? They will be those who will be used in that day to stem back the invading hosts. Who they are is unknown, but it will be known at the time of fulfilment. Then Assyria, the land of Nimrod, as well as all opposing world powers will be completely ended.

Verses 7-15. The blessed remnant and the kingdom

Micah 5:7-15. The restored and blessed remnant of Jacob will possess a double character. They will be used in blessing and refreshing among the nations, "as dew from the LORD, as the showers upon the grass." On the other hand, they will be in the midst of many people as a lion and as a young lion, to avenge unrighteousness and opposition. All the adversaries and enemies of Israel will be cut down and cut off Numbers 24:9; see exposition of Balaam's parables at the close of annotations on Numbers). All the instruments of war will be done away with, as well as witchcrafts and the soothsayers. Spiritism, Christian Science, theosophy and all the other demon cults flourishing now, and still more before

He comes, will find their ignominious end. Idolatry, the graven images, and the standing images will be abolished. Before the Lord comes the evil spirit of idolatry will once more seize hold on Israel, that is, among the apostates. (See annotations on Matthew 12:43-45.) While all this refers to Israel it also includes the rest of the world. All offences will be gathered out of His kingdom. The better rendering of Micah 5:15 is, “And I will execute vengeance in anger and fury upon the nations which hearkened not.” That is, during the end of the age God sent forth a testimony to the nations and those who hearkened not will fall under the wrath of the lion of the tribe of Judah.

THE THIRD PROPHETIC DISCOURSE (6-7)

Chapter 6

6-7. Final controversy and mercy

- 1. The words of Jehovah to His people (Micah 6:1-5)*
- 2. Israel’s answer (Micah 6:6-7)*
- 3. The moral demands of Jehovah (Micah 6:8)*
- 4. The Lord must judge them (Micah 6:9-16)*

6:1-7:6. The people’s ingratitude and sin

Micah 6:1-5. This chapter is cast in the form of a controversy. The utterance has been called by some the most important in the prophetic literature. It is hardly this, nor is, as critics claim, the eighth verse a definition of religion, “the greatest saying in the Old Testament.”

The beginning is sublime, “Hear ye now what Jehovah saith!” The prophet is to arise and contend before the mountains so that the hills may hear his voice. The mountains and the enduring foundations of the earth are to hear the controversy the Lord has with His people and how He pleads with Israel.

Then follows the tender loving pleading of Jehovah, who still loves His people, in spite of their wickedness, “O My people, what have I done to thee?” What matchless condescension! The Lord whom they had rejected, from whom they had turned away, does not denounce them for their sins, nor does He enumerate them, but He asks whether He had been at fault. Had He done anything amiss towards them? Had He wearied His people? He is willing that they should testify against Him. Had He done anything that they should get tired of Him?

We may imagine a pause here, as if He were waiting for an answer. But there is no answer.

He continues to speak. He had brought them out of Egypt, redeemed them out of the house of bondage; He had given them Moses, Aaron, and Miriam, by whom He led them. He reminded them of Balak, King of Moab, and Balaam, the son of Beor, who wanted to have Israel cursed. But what had Balaam been forced to say? “How shall I curse whom God has not cursed!” What a faithful, loving God He had been to them.

Micah 6:6-7. Here the people speak, but it is significant that they do not address the Lord, who had spoken to them by the prophet. They knew themselves guilty and condemned. So they address the prophet and ask what to do. “Wherewith shall I come before the LORD, and bow myself before the high God? shall I come before Him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousand rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?” For generations they had brought burnt offerings, thousands of rams and rivers of oil. But it was nothing but an outward worship; inwardly they remained the same. But they were willing to do more in this outward service, even to the sacrifice of the firstborn. Isaiah 1:10-31 is an interesting commentary to these questions, showing how the Lord despised these ceremonies of a people who were evil doers and corrupters. (See also Psalms 50:7-23.)

Micah 6:8. The prophet gives the answer of Jehovah. “He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?” Where has God made the demand? In the law. There is no more deadly error than to hold up this verse as the essence of the gospel and the one true, saving religion. Yet this we hear today on all sides. But the most loud-mouthed advocates of this “saving religion” practise what the Lord demands the least. And there is a good reason for it. Israel did not act in righteousness, nor did they love mercy, nor did they walk humbly in fellowship with the Lord. Why not? Because they were uncircumcised in their hearts. To do right, to love mercy, to walk in humility with God is impossible for the natural man; in order to do this there must be the new birth, and the new birth takes place when the sinner believes and expresses his faith in true repentance. Only a blind leader of the blind can say this verse is the gospel, and that faith in the deity of Christ and in His atoning, ever blessed work on the cross is not needed. Israel never has been anything like this which Jehovah demands. The day is coming when the Lord in His grace will give them a new heart and take away the stony heart, and fill them with His spirit. (See Ezekiel 36:1-38.)

Micah 6:9-16. The Lord speaks again and puts before them once more their moral degeneration. Wicked balances, deceitful weights, the deeds of unrighteousness. They were destitute of mercy, for they were full of violence, lies and deceit. Therefore judgment must now fall upon them.

Chapter 7

1. The prophet's complaint (Micah 7:1-6)

2. Confession, prayer and thanksgiving (Micah 7:7-20)

Micah 7:1-6. It is the prophet's voice complaining over the conditions of the people. But he is also the typical representative of the remnant during the time of travail in Zion. It is to be noted that our Lord quotes from this portion of Micah. (See Matthew 10:21, which dispensationally applies to the future remnant.) In the midst of the conditions the prophet describes we read that his refuge was prayer, looking to the Lord with the assurance that He will hear. "Therefore I will look unto the LORD I will wait for the God of my salvation; my God will hear me" (Micah 7:7). This will be the attitude of the godly Israelites during the time of trouble.

7:7-20. Confession, petition and thanksgiving

Micah 7:7-20. It is Israel speaking in the remnant, represented by the prophet. The enemy is addressed; at the time of Micah it was the Assyrian, the type of the end Assyrian; but it includes all the world powers in their anti-Semitic attitude. The real Israel has always had this comfort, founded on the fact that God's gifts and calling are without repentance, that they are the elect nation, that their fall must be followed by a spiritual and national resurrection (Romans 11:1-36). Hence they say, "Rejoice not against me, mine enemy; when I fall I shall rise again; when I sit in darkness, the LORD will be a light unto me." This will be the case when their greatest darkness comes in the end of the age (Isaiah 60:1-22). It is a willing submission to the chastisement of the Lord expressed in Micah 6:9; they acknowledge their sins and once more declare, "He will bring me forth to light, and I shall behold his righteousness."

This is followed by a prophetic declaration. The day is coming when her walls will be built again, and in that day shall the decree be far removed. The latter statement may mean the same which the prophet Jeremiah reveals in Jeremiah 31:31 to the end of the chapter. The old decree, or law, will end, and there will be the new covenant into which Judah and Israel enter "in that day." Then the nations will gather to restored Israel in the kingdom. (Compare Micah 7:12 with Isaiah 60:3-10.)

In the meantime the land will be desolate, as it is now, the fruit of their evil doings, till the day comes when the wilderness will be a fruitful field Isaiah 32:16 when the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose Isaiah 35:1 .

Once more the prophet's voice is heard in supplication. The prayer in Micah 6:14 is answered by the Lord in Micah 7:15-17. The Lord will show again in that day the marvellous things as He did in their past redemption out of Egypt. The nations, their enemies, will be witness to it; they will be humiliated in the dust.

The three concluding verses belong to the greatest in the Old Testament Scriptures. Here we listen to a great praise and outburst of adoration. "Who is a God like unto Thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? He retaineth not His anger forever, because He delighted in mercy. He will turn again, He will have compassion upon us; He will subdue our iniquities; and Thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea. Thou wilt perform the truth to Jacob, and the mercy to Abraham, which Thou hast sworn unto our fathers from the days of old."

Such will be the future praise of the remnant of His heritage, when the Deliverer comes to Zion and turns away ungodliness from Jacob, when the covenant with them will be consummated and their sins will be taken away Romans 11:26-36). Once a year orthodox Jews go to a running stream and scatter into it bits of paper and small articles, repeating while they do it these three verses (the so-called Tashlik ceremony). It is but an outward act, yet testifying that there is still faith in Israel. It will be a glorious day when God forgives them their sins and remembers them no more.

Micah's Messianic Prophecies

The single Old Testament prophecy that specifies the birthplace of Jesus appears in a Messianic vision of Micah, a prophet who lived in the eighth century B.C.

But thou, Beth-lehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.

Micah 5:2. Here, Micah clearly states that the future ruler of Israel would come from Bethlehem. By associating the Messiah with the birthplace and ancestral home of King David, the prophet recalls and reaffirms the earlier prophecies that the Messiah would come from David's line.

Yet the prophet cautions the nation not to expect a mere man, for the Messiah would be the One "whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting." No mere man could be described as eternally preexistent. Thus, the ruler who would "come forth unto me" must unquestionably be God Himself.

Micah's prophecy was completely foreign to the thinking of his countrymen both in his own day and in the day of Jesus. They believed that God is a single person existing outside the universe which He created. How then could He limit Himself and become a being of flesh and blood within the confines of the universe? If He were to forsake His role as transcendent sustainer, would not the universe fall apart?

Invalidity of Modern Translations

Critics recoil from admitting that Micah foresees a divine Messiah. They therefore change the words "whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting" to "whose origin is from of old, from ancient days" (1). Micah, they say, is only prophesying that the future ruler of Israel would come from a line rooted in antiquity. Yet their translation does not stand examination, for two reasons.

1. "Goings forth" is the exact translation of a single word, the feminine plural of *motsa'* (2). This word can, by extension, refer to a source of going forth, such as a spring of water (2 Kings 2:21; Psa. 107:33, 35; Isa. 41:18; 58:11), an exit (Ezek. 42:11 NASB), or the east (Psa. 75:6); or to something that goes forth, such as a word (Deut. 8:3) or an export (rendered "import" in 1 Kings 10:28 NASB) (3). Whether *motsa'* can also signify the more abstract concept "origin" is debatable. That concept is remote from every use of the word outside Micah 5:2 (4). The word seems to always retain the idea of actual motion.

In any case, the translation "origin" or "origins" in Micah 5:2 is not supported by the context (5). The word clearly describes past activity of the same kind that would occur again when the future ruler emerged from Bethlehem (6). He would then "come forth unto me" with acceptable love and obedience, just as He has done in past "goings [or, 'comings'] forth," even "from of old, from everlasting."

2. The Hebrew word rendered "everlasting" in the KJV is *olam*, which the Old Testament often uses with reference to the eternal state of God. A few specimens will suffice.

“Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting [*olam*] to everlasting [*olam*], thou art God.” (Psalm 90:2)

22 The LORD possessed me [wisdom] in the beginning of his way, before his works of old.

23 I was set up from everlasting [*olam*], from the beginning, or ever the earth was. (Proverbs 8:22-23)

Doubtless thou art our father, though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not: thou, O LORD, art our father, our redeemer; thy name is from everlasting [*olam*]. (Isaiah 63:16)

1 The LORD reigneth, he is clothed with majesty; the LORD is clothed with strength, wherewith he hath girded himself: the world also is established, that it cannot be moved.

2 Thy throne is established of old: thou art from everlasting [*olam*].
(*Psalm 93:1-2*)

Evidence from Two Birth Narratives

The independent but not discrepant birth narratives in Matthew and Luke agree that Jesus was born in Bethlehem.

Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem. (Matthew 2:1)

1 And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be taxed.

2 (And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.)

3 And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city.

4 And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:)

5 To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child.

6 And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered.

7 And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn. (Luke 2:1-7)

Luke explains how Jesus came to be born in a place far from His parents' home in Nazareth of Galilee. A census then underway compelled Joseph to journey from Galilee to Bethlehem, the city of his fathers. He took along his wife, Mary, although she was about ready to give birth to Jesus. While they were in Bethlehem, the child was born.

Jesus' Galilean Origins

In the view of many critics, the stories of Jesus' birth in Bethlehem were invented by the church to prove that Jesus fulfilled Messianic prophecy. In an effort to discredit these stories, they look for evidence in the Gospels that His actual birthplace was elsewhere. They imagine that they find such evidence in John 7, which tells about one of Jesus' last forays into the Temple. His enigmatic sayings set off a debate in the great crowd that flocked to hear Him.

40 Many of the people therefore, when they heard this saying, said, Of a truth this is the Prophet.

41 Others said, This is the Christ. But some said, Shall Christ come out of Galilee?

42 Hath not the scripture said, That Christ cometh of the seed of David, and out of the town of Bethlehem, where David was?

43 So there was a division among the people because of him. (John 7:40-43)

Some in the crowd decided that Jesus must be the Christ. Others contended that He could not be the Christ because He came from Galilee rather than Bethlehem. When news of the commotion in the Temple reached the religious leaders, they discussed Jesus among themselves and rejected Him on the same pretext. They said that His place of origin invalidated His claims.

45 Then came the officers to the chief priests and Pharisees; and they said unto them, Why have ye not brought him?

46 The officers answered, Never man spake like this man.

47 Then answered them the Pharisees, Are ye also deceived?

48 Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed on him?

49 But this people who knoweth not the law are cursed.

50 Nicodemus saith unto them, (he that came to Jesus by night, being one of them,)

51 Doth our law judge any man, before it hear him, and know what he doeth?

52 They answered and said unto him, Art thou also of Galilee? Search, and look: for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet. (John 7:45-52)

The critics, electing to believe the wild tossings of public opinion, infer that Galilee was the true place of Jesus' birth.

In his first look at this scene in John 7, a reader might find it somewhat puzzling that neither Jesus nor His disciples came forward with assurances that He was indeed born in Bethlehem, as prophecy required. He might think it was incumbent upon Jesus to answer any Biblical objection to His claims. Yet even a casual reader of the Gospels must notice that Jesus often refrained from defending Himself. How He dealt with people depended on whether they had faith. If they did, He nourished it with an act of gracious intervention in their lives. If they did not, He left them to sink further into unbelief. He knew perfectly well that those who balked at His Galilean origins were not sincere. They scorned Him not because they wished to honor the prophetic Scriptures, but because, in the hardness of their hearts, they wished to continue in their sins.

If His opponents had been governed by a genuine desire for the truth, they would have searched the Scriptures and discovered that the Messiah would be primarily active in Galilee.

1 Nevertheless the dimness shall not be such as was in her vexation, when at the first he lightly afflicted the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, and afterward did more grievously afflict her by the way of the sea beyond Jordan, in Galilee of the nations.

2 The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined. . . .

6 For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. (Isaiah 9:1-2, 6)

In Galilee of the nations, long-abiding dimness and darkness would finally be dispelled by a great light. That light would shine at the coming of the child who would bear the name of God—that is, at the dawning of the Christ. Indeed, Galilee was where Jesus' ministry began and where it centered until the final months of His life. His Galilean background was another token that He was the Christ of prophecy. Yet even the leading scribes and Pharisees did not understand that although the Christ would arise in Bethlehem, He would appear in Galilee. The complaint of the religious leaders that "this people who knoweth not the law are cursed" (John 7:49) was an ironic indictment of themselves.

Circumstantial Evidence

The same kind of evidence that attests to the Virgin Birth also confirms that Jesus was born in Bethlehem.

1. **Corroborating circumstances.** Imagine how difficult it would be for a modern religious sect to claim that its founder, still living or recently dead, was born in a city other than his real birthplace. Enemies could check the claim by interviewing relatives and neighbors of the family or by consulting public records. Soon, the lie would be caught in a perpetual swirl of controversy, or be laughed into oblivion. Such a lie would have been almost as difficult to introduce and maintain in the first century. Yet, in the extant history of that century, there is no trace of any dispute concerning the birthplace of Jesus. There is, in fact, no evidence that enemies of the early church contested anything in the stories of His nativity. That these stories could have emerged and survived in a hostile environment tends in itself to verify them.

2. **The credibility of the apostles.** The chief apostles doubtless gave their blessing to the Gospels of Matthew and Luke. Thus, if these Gospels are prevaricating when they tell us that Jesus was born in Bethlehem, we must brand the chief apostles themselves as schemers and liars. Yet these men certified their testimony concerning Jesus by going to a martyr's death.

The stories of Jesus' nativity, showing that He was born in the place, manner, and lineage required by prophecy, are a cornerstone of the Christian faith. Anyone who denies that Jesus is the Christ must treat these stories as pious fictions—or, more bluntly, lies. But suppose for a minute that the early church actually did embellish the gospel with dishonest stories of how He fulfilled prophecy. The risk in any lie, of course, is that it might be exposed by the truth, and the truth bearing on the claims of the early church was still fresh and easily discovered. Thus, if more and more lies had been added to the gospel, they would eventually have broken down the credibility of the church. Yet, the

church did not hesitate to preach that Jesus fulfilled a long list of prophecies concerning the Messiah. The apostles evidently did not fear contradiction and embarrassment by facts, and indeed no enemy of the church ever unearthed facts injurious to its growth and prosperity.

Commentary on the Book of Nahum

Introduction

Nahum's history is unknown. All we know of him is that he was an Elkoshite. His name means "comforter." Some have identified Elkosh with a village of similar name which is in existence today, not far from the site of ancient Nineveh, on the eastern banks of the Tigris. There the grave of Nahum is shown, adored alike by nominal Christians and the followers of Mohammed. But careful research has shown this to be absolutely without any foundation whatever. No one knew anything about that grave till about the sixteenth century of our era. It is the Elkosh which existed in Galilee and which is still known as a little village. Nahum, like Jonah, was a Galilean.

The Date of Nahum

The opening verse does not give a hint as to the time Nahum lived and prophesied. Critics, on account of some Assyrian expressions found in the book have put the date later. From internal evidences we can ascertain the date without difficulty. Judah and not Israel is addressed by Nahum. There is no reason to assume that he lived in exile and uttered his prophecy in the land of Assyria. He spoke in the land of Israel, probably in Jerusalem. The most significant passage which gives us important information is Nahum 1:11 : "There is one come out of thee (out of Assyria) that imagineth evil against the LORD, a wicked counsellor." Who was this wicked counsellor, who imagined evil against the Lord? There can be but one answer. A wicked counsellor came out of Assyria, the mouthpiece of its reigning King Sennacherib. His name was Rab-shakeh. He blasphemed and defied the God of Israel. His vile words are recorded in 2 Kings 18:26-27. The description of Nahum fits this Assyrian villain. We are justified in placing Nahum in the period of Hezekiah; he was therefore contemporary with Isaiah and Micah.

There is an interesting link between Jonah, Micah and Nahum. Jonah was sent with the message to Nineveh about one hundred and fifty years before Nahum prophesied. Through his message Nineveh turned to the Lord. Isaiah and Micah prophesied concerning the same Assyrian power, the capital of which was Nineveh. They witnessed the Assyrian attack upon Jerusalem and Jehovah's

intervention in behalf of His people. They saw the downfall of the kingdom of Israel through Assyria and were well acquainted with the wickedness of the Assyrian. And then came Nahum from Galilee, and the Spirit of God gave through him the great message of the coming complete destruction of Nineveh.



Archaeological light – Amon-Re

Among all the multitude of Egyptian deities, the Egypt god Amon-Re was considered to be the **king of the gods**. While most Egyptian gods were 'born' at various points in the history of the Egyptian nation and many floated in and out of popularity, the Egypt god Amon-Re appears to have been present in the mythology and culture of the Egyptian people almost from the very inception of this complex and mysterious nation.

Originally, the Egypt god Amon-Re was known only as **Amon**, or Amen and sometimes Amun. Amon was often associated with such symbols as the ram, the goose and the bull.

While Amon was worshipped to some degree throughout the Egyptian nation, his popularity, or cult, seemed to have reached frenzied proportions in two

particular cities. He was considered to be the patron saint of the city of **Thebes**, where the ruling pharaoh and his royal family resided. Here he became joined with the **sun god Re** and the two became known as the **Egypt god Amon-Re**. He was also very popular in **Hermopolis**, where he was believed to be married to Mut. The couple gave birth to a son named Khonsu, who was associated with the moon. Throughout some parts of Egypt it was believed that Amon was at least partially responsible for creation. Many popular beliefs regarding Amon included his protection of the weak.

Amon remained popular throughout various points in the history of the Egyptian nation, generally outrivaling other ancient Egyptian gods. The Egyptian deity did suffer his moments of unpopularity; particularly during the rule of Queen Hatshepsut. The female pharaoh who took control of the Egyptian throne upon the death of her husband and half-brother attempted to authenticate her right to rule Egypt by declaring herself to be divinely appointed by Amon and even went so far as to indicate she was his daughter. The temple she built at **Deir-el-Bahri** was dedicated to the *Egypt god Amon-Re*.

During the reign of Akhenaten, the pharaoh attempted to set aside worship of Amon and replace the deity with another, the sun god Aten. At that time, King Akhenaten moved the royal residence from its traditional location in Thebes to a relatively underdeveloped area and made further attempts at establishing a monotheistic religion throughout the Egyptian nation, dedicated solely to the worship of Aten. The popularity and dedication to the Egypt god Amon-Re proved to be too strong however. Aten never really gained the foothold that King Akhenaten would have preferred. In fact, his manipulation only seemed to cause the Egyptian people to despise him more. Upon his death and the latter coronation of King Tutankhamon, Egypt returned to formally worshipping Amon-Re. Almost all references and idols that were dedicated to Aten during the reign of Akhenaten were destroyed.

Assyrian History

A knowledge of Assyrian history, and its great capital, Nineveh, is needed for a better understanding of Nahum's prophecy. It is strange that ancient writers like Ctesias, the physician of Artaxerxes, Mnemon, and Diodorus Siculus have but little to say about Assyria, and many identified Assyria with Babylonia. The infidel critics have seen their defeat in this respect. Not believing the Bible, they trusted in the historical accounts of pagan writers, and assuming that they were right discredited the Word of God, only to find out afterward that the Bible is

right and the heathen historians were wrong. For instance, Isaiah mentions in chapter 20 Sargon, king of Assyria. Because the secular historians know nothing of such a king, they sat in judgment upon the Word of God. They denied that such a king ever existed, thinking that the statement by Isaiah is an invention. It was then proven that Sargon was a great warrior, the father of Sennacherib, and that Isaiah gave a true record.

Hezekiah, the King of Judah, under whom Nahum as well as Isaiah and Micah prophesied, had paid tribute for many years to Assyria. When he revolted an Assyrian army appeared in the land, by which over forty Judean cities were captured. Jerusalem itself was saved by divine intervention Isaiah 37:36. Sennacherib, who had sent the expedition against Jerusalem, being murdered by his own sons in 681 B.C. Isaiah 37:38. His successor was Esarhaddon, who besieged Sidon and carried its treasures to Nineveh. Assurbanipal succeeded him to the throne and made his son Shamash-shumukin regent of Babylon, for Babylon was then an insignificant power. Here we must remember that when Babylon was next to nothing in world history, Isaiah had predicted its coming greatness and conquest of Jerusalem by the Babylonian power. Under Assurbanipal the ancient and great capital of Upper Egypt was captured, which is mentioned by Nahum in chapter 3:8, 10; that is, No-Amon is Thebes. Assurbanipal conquered many countries and nations; he razed Susa, and immense treasures were carried off to Nineveh. During his reign every year saw a cruel war, and ruin and carnage were spread in every direction. The captives were treated in a horrible manner, with all kinds of torture. The nations suffered terribly under this wicked monarch, so that when finally Assyria fell the nations rejoiced, as mentioned by Nahum at the conclusion of his prophecy. "All that hear the bruit of thee shall clap hands over thee; for upon whom hath not thy wickedness passed continually?" After Assurbanipal Assyria declined. He was followed by Asshur-etil-ilani and Sin-shar-ishkun, and finally Assyria and its great and proud capital were conquered by Nabopolassar, the father of Nebuchadnezzar and Cyaxares. This happened about 625 B.C., just about ninety years after Nahum announced the destruction of Nineveh.

The Message of Nahum

His prophetic message concerns exclusively Nineveh. Critics have put question marks over against certain parts of this book, while other critics have contradicted their fellow critics. In fact, if one wishes to find theories and assumptions, wild guesses and fanciful hypotheses, the camp of the rationalist is the place. The unity and integrity of the prophecy of Nahum is beyond controversy. As the opening verse announces, it is the burden of Nineveh.

Typically Nineveh stands for the world powers to the end of the times of the Gentiles, and its overthrow foreshadows the overthrow of the final world powers.

The Division of Nahum

The three chapters of which Nahum is composed give us the correct division of his prophecy. In the first chapter we find the purpose of God is dealing in judgment with the oppressor of Israel. The second chapter describes the overthrow, the plundering, and destruction of Nineveh. The third chapter shows the guilt and the well-deserved judgment and ruin of Nineveh.

Chapter 1

1. God's majestic holiness

The Purpose of God in Dealing with the Assyrian Oppressor

- 1. The superscription (Nahum 1:1)*
- 2. Jehovah's majesty in judgment (Nahum 1:2-6)*
- 3. His people comforted and assured (Nahum 1:7-13)*
- 4. The judgment of Assyria and the result (Nahum 1:14-15)*

Verse 1. Superscription

Nahum 1:1. The burden of Nineveh; it means that there is to follow a weighty prophetic oracle concerning the great world city of Nineveh whose dimensions are given by Jonah, which have been confirmed by excavations. The next sentence gives us the definite information that what follows in the book is the vision of Nahum the Elkoshite.

Verses 2-11. Character of God in judgment

Nahum 1:2-6. It is a sublime description. God is a jealous God. The jealousy of God has for its source the love of His elect people. (See Zechariah 1:1-21.) "For thou shalt worship no other god; for the Lord, whose name is jealous, is a jealous God" Exodus 34:14. He is jealous over His people lest they serve other gods. And because He is a jealous God, a holy, a sin-hating God, He must be an avenger of what is against His character. He will take vengeance on His adversaries and reserveth wrath for His enemies. Destructive criticism has

invented an infidel theory as if the God of wrath and vengeance were the product of the mind of man, and that Jehovah is some tribal deity, corresponding to the tribal gods of the surrounding heathen nations. Thus criticism rejects the Jehovah of the Bible and invents its own god, rejecting the threatenings of coming wrath and judgment as taught in the Old Testament and in the New in connection with the coming of the Lord, branding these revelations the result of the false apocalyptic teachings of the Jews. God is the God of Love, as much as He is the God of Wrath. He must be that or He would not be the God of Light and Holiness. He cannot afford to let evil go on forever. He is the Lord slow to anger. His patience is great, but He will not acquit the guilty, who continue to sin and do evil. Nahum 1:2 and Nahum 1:3 describe His righteous government. Then follows a beautiful poetic description of His majesty, a description suited to the finite mind of man.

In whirlwind and storm is His way, And clouds are the dust of His feet. He rebuketh the sea and drieth it up And empties all the rivers. Carmel, Bashan, and Lebanon are thinned out, And the Flower of Lebanon languisheth. Mountains quake before Him And all the hills melt away; And the earth is consumed in His presence, The world and all that dwell therein. Before His indignation who can stand? And who can abide His fierce anger? His fury is poured out like fire. And the rocks are thrown down by Him.

What to the mind of man is more imposing than the towering storm-clouds, and what more terrifying than the onrushing whirlwind, which lays low the forest? Man, the creature of the dust, steps upon the dust of the earth, to which man returns in the hour of death. But Jehovah has the clouds as the dust of His feet. If He arises in His righteous wrath all will be swept before Him, and the mountains, symbolical of the kingdoms of the earth, will quake before Him, and the pride of man will be humbled in the dust. Isaiah 2:1-22.

Nahum 1:7-13. While in the foregoing section God speaks of His own character in dealing with evil, He now gives comfort and assurance to those who trust in Him, that is, to His people. He knoweth them, the comfort all His people have at all times, the Lord knoweth them that are His, and as our Lord said, "I know my sheep." For such the Lord is good and a stronghold in the day of trouble. But His enemies will feel His wrath. "But with an overrunning flood He will make an utter end of the place thereof (Nineveh) and darkness will pursue His enemies."

In the prophetic application we must look beyond the horizon of Nahum's time and the judgment of Nineveh. The day of the Lord brings the final overthrow of the proud world powers, and the remnant of His people will have in the Lord a refuge, while the judgment floods sweep over the earth (see Psalms 46:1-11) .

On the ninth verse many expositors have erred in their interpretation. It is also addressed to Israel. "What do ye imagine against the LORD?" Do you imagine that the Lord is not going to do it? Will He repent of His judgment purpose? No! He who has spoken "will make an utter end," and to His people it is spoken "affliction shall not rise up the second time."

Then a description of the Assyrian in Nahum 1:10. They are entangled like thorns, so that they will find no escape when the judgment overtakes them, while they are drunk with wine in their carousings. Like the dry stubble are they to be devoured. Rab-shakeh, as mentioned in our introduction, is the one who came out of Assyria against Jerusalem with evil imaginations. The better translation of Nahum 1:12 is, "Though they be strong, and likewise many, even so shall they be cut down, and he (the Assyrian) shall pass away."

The second half of the twelfth verse concerns His people. "Though I have afflicted thee, I will afflict thee no more." One can see at once that the "no more" demands a future fulfillment. For, while it is true, the Assyrian did no longer afflict Israel, yet affliction upon affliction has been their lot. But there comes the day when all afflictions will cease. "For now I will break his yoke (the yoke of the Assyrian) from off thee (Israel) and I will burst thy bonds asunder."

Verses 12-15. The fall of Nineveh announced

Nahum 1:14-15. The fourteenth verse gives the judgment commandment as to Assyria and Nineveh. They are vile, and the God who declared His character in the beginning of this message, is going to act accordingly.

The result is stated in the last verse of this chapter. "Behold, upon the mountains the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace! O Judah, keep thy solemn feasts, perform thy vows; for the wicked shall no more pass through thee; he is utterly cut off." The prophet beholds how the messengers rush over the mountains with the good news. Judah and Jerusalem are delivered. Peace has come. Praise and thanksgiving are heard in Zion.

We must not overlook the similar passage in Isaiah 52:7. "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace, that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation, that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth! ... Break forth into joy, sing together, ye waste places of Jerusalem; for the LORD hath comforted His people, He hath redeemed Jerusalem. The LORD hath made bare His holy arm in the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God." This

was spoken in connection with Babylon's overthrow, but its wider application and meaning is future. The overthrow of Babylon and Nineveh did not result in the glorious things spoken of by Isaiah and Nahum. Not then did the ends of the earth see the salvation of God, nor was Jerusalem redeemed, nor God as King enthroned in Zion. It is all yet to come. When that day comes, the messengers will go forth from Jerusalem and declare the good tidings to the nations of the world. The good news of the kingdom will be heralded far and wide, in the beginning of the millennium, and then the abiding, abundant peace will come, so that all the nations see the salvation of the God of Israel. The wicked, opposing powers of the world will then be no more.



Babylonian Chronicle describes fall of Nineveh

Chapter 2

The Overthrow, Plundering and Destruction Of Nineveh

2. Siege and destruction of Nineveh

- 1. The capture of Nineveh announced and described (Nahum 2:1-10)*
- 2. The completeness of the judgment (Nahum 2:11-13)*

Verses 1-12. The overthrow of Nineveh predicted and described

Nahum 2:1-10. This great prophecy was literally fulfilled some ninety years after Nahum had spoken. When these words were spoken Nineveh was in the zenith of her glory. Who told Nahum the Elkoshite that the proud world city would undergo such a sack and be completely wiped out? Who moved his pen to give such a vivid description of what would take place? There is but one answer—the Spirit of God. How was the prophecy fulfilled? Cyaxares of the Medes had surrounded Nineveh in the north. Nabopolassar of Babylon entered into an alliance with Cyaxares against the Assyrians, which was sealed by the marriage of the daughter of Cyaxares, Amunia, with the son of Nabopolassar, that is, Nebuchadnezzar, who appeared then as the colleague of his father, till the Lord called him as the instrument of judgment upon Jerusalem and he became the head of the Babylonian monarchy (Daniel 1:11). They made an assault upon Nineveh. The Assyrian king, a son of Assurbanipal, collected all his forces into the lower part of the immense city. Three times the forces of the Assyrian sallied forth from the city and inflicted severe punishment upon the besieging armies, and Nabopolassar had great difficulty in keeping the Median forces from flight. The Assyrians after these successes abandoned themselves to great carousings, as stated in Nahum 1:10. But during that night they were attacked by the besiegers and driven back behind the walls. Then the troops which were under the command of the brother-in-law of the Assyrian king were routed and driven into the river Tigris. The main part of Nineveh was still safe. In the third year of the siege the river which surrounded the city became its enemy. Great rains had fallen and suddenly there was a tremendous flood which broke down the walls surrounding the city. This was predicted by Nahum in this chapter in the sixth verse. The king despaired of saving his life. He had sent his family north, and when all hope was gone he shut himself up with all his treasures in the royal citadel and burned himself with them. Then the victors entered into the city, and, after securing an immense booty, which was carried to Babylon and Ecbatana, the Babylonians set fire to the sacked city, and destroyed it completely by fire.

The prophet in the beginning of this chapter addresses Nineveh; he urges that she make ready to defend herself, for he that dasheth into pieces has appeared before her walls. It was the Lord who had used the Assyrian to bring judgment upon Israel and upon Jacob, but now the time had come for the restoration of their former excellency. The Authorized Version gives the wrong sense, and the second verse is correctly rendered: “For the LORD bringeth again the excellency of Jacob, as the excellency of Israel; for the emptiers have emptied them out, and marred their vine branches.” Then the besieging army is described. Here we read of their glittering arms, their fast racing chariots, which dash along like lightning.

We have heard even reputable Bible teachers make the statement that Nahum predicted the automobiles racing along our streets. Such fanciful, far-fetched and arbitrary applications of the Word of God do immense harm. Nahum does not anticipate the automobile, but gives a picture of the besiegers of Nineveh with their chariots, drawn by swift horses.

In Nahum 2:5 the Assyrian king is seen turning to his army, as he sees the chariots dashing along the highways and broadways which lead to the city; he counts his worthies, his generals and captains. And the army suddenly called, in making haste stumbled along in disorder and made haste to reach the walls. As stated above, the sixth verse (Nahum 2:6) was fulfilled when the river became a flood and undermined the foundations of the walls, so that the besiegers could enter in. And when Babylon fell, under the grandson of Nebuchadnezzar, the river also was the means of defeat, for the enemy had diverted the river Euphrates and through the dry river-bed entered the city.

The word “Huzzab” in the seventh verse (Nahum 2:7) has led to a great deal of discussion. Some claim that it is the name of the queen of Nineveh; others that it is a symbolical name of the city; archaeology throws no light upon its meaning. We believe the word “Huzzab” should be translated, “it is determined.” Then the sentence reads, “It is determined; she is made bare and led away captive; and her maids moan like the doves, smiting upon their breasts.”

The flight of the population of Nineveh is pictured in the eighth verse. Like as a pool of water empties when the sluices are opened, so they flee. The soldiers cry “Stand! Stand!” but there is a panic. They rush away and none looks back.

In the next two verses the plundering of the city is predicted. Silver and gold is taken away. There seems to be no end of all the glorious things which were heaped together in Nineveh. The city is emptied; hearts melt, courage is gone; there are tottering knees and pale faces.

Verse 13. The reason for Nineveh’s destruction

Nahum 2:11-13. Is it a sarcastic question which is asked, “Where is the den of lions?” What has become of her proud boastings of being the Queen-City of the nations?

Then Jehovah speaks of the completeness of her judgment and overthrow. “Behold, I am against thee, saith the LORD of hosts, and I will burn her chariots in the smoke, and I will cut off thy prey from the earth, and the voice of thy messengers shall no more be heard.”

Chapter 3

2. Nineveh an example of God's judgment

Nineveh's Guilt and Well-Deserved Judgment

1. *The great wickedness of Nineveh* (Nahum 3:1-7)
2. *Her fate to be like the fate of No-Amon* (Nahum 3:8-13)
3. *Her well-deserved and complete judgment* (Nahum 3:14-19)

Verses 1-17. Her sins reap their harvest.

Nahum 3:1-7. Nineveh was a bloody city, for her kings never knew peace, but were constantly at war. The Hebrew Ir-Damim means "city of blood drops." They boasted of making the blood of their enemies run like rivers. It was a city full of lies and rapine. Her word could not be trusted; she broke truces and covenants and deceived nations with lying promises of help and protection. As stated in the second chapter, she was ferocious as a lion and the prey never departed.

But she received as she had sown. The next two verses give again the scenes of carnage during her judgment hour.

The cracking of the whip; And the noise of the rattling wheels; The prancing of the horses, And the dashing chariots.

The horseman mounting, And the flashing sword, And the glittering of the spear And the multitude of the Slain; And the heaps of the corpses. There is no end of dead bodies; They stumble over their corpses.

And why? "Because of the multitudes of the whoredoms of the well-favored harlot, the mistress of witchcrafts, that selleth nations through her whoredoms, and families through her witchcrafts." She made herself attractive as a harlot does, to ensnare and beguile weaker nations. Like all these ancient cities she was filled with witchcrafts, that is, sorceries. The power of darkness manifested itself in the dominion of evil spirits, which Nineveh courted. Spiritism, as advocated today by men of research and culture, of the type of Oliver Lodge and Conan Doyle, and a multitude of others, is not a new thing. Egypt, Babylon, and Nineveh and other centers of paganism were filled with occultism, the practice of which hastened their doom; as the doom of our age will be consummated through the influence of the same evil powers.

Then Jehovah speaks again, as the God of retribution and judgment. These are solemn words.

Behold! I am against thee, saith the Lord of hosts; And uncover thy skirts over thy face, And display to the nations thy nakedness, And to kingdoms thy shame! And I will cast vileness upon thee, And disgrace thee And make thee a gazing-stock. And it shall come to pass, That all that look upon thee Shall flee from thee, And say, Nineveh is laid waste; Who will lament over her? Whence shall I seek comforters for her?

She had acted the harlot and now she receives the punishment of a harlot, which consisted in exposing her in public. She would be a gazing-stock for nations and kingdoms, as the righteous God stripped her of all and exposed her shame. There would be no one to lament over the vile mistress of witchcrafts.

Nahum 3:8-13. “Art thou better than No-Amon that dwelt by the rivers? Waters were round about her; her bulwark was the sea and her wall was of the sea. Ethiopia and Egypt were her strength, and there was no limit; Put and Lubim were thy helpers.” No-Amon was an Egyptian city, known to the Greeks by the name of Thebes. The judgment of No-Amon, or, as it is also called, “No,” was announced by the prophet Jeremiah. “The LORD of Hosts, the God of Israel saith, Behold I will punish the multitude of No, and Pharaoh and Egypt, with their gods and their kings, even Pharaoh and them that trust in him” Jeremiah 46:25. Ezekiel likewise had spoken of this great Egyptian city Ezekiel 30:14-26. There existed an immense temple there in honor of the god of No, the building had great facades and columns and covered a large space; the ruins which are left are still most wonderful to look upon. It was situated on the upper Nile some four hundred miles from Cairo, and was built along the river front. On the other side of the river was the city of the dead, the Necropolis, with a long line of temples, devoted to the worship of former Pharaohs, and behind these temples were thousands of tombs, many of which have been uncovered by the spade of the explorer. The cuneiform monuments tell of the fate of Thebes. Though she was defended by the strong men of Ethiopia and of Egypt and Phut, and the Libyans, nothing could avert her doom. She was carried into captivity, her young children were dashed in pieces, and her great men were bound in chains. Could then Nineveh hope to escape? The fate of No-Amon was a prophecy of Nineveh’s fate. She was even more wicked than the Egyptian city. Her fate is described in Nahum 3:11-13.

Verses 18-19. Lament over the king of Assyria

Nahum 3:14-19. Dramatically the prophet calls upon Nineveh to draw water for the siege, to secure clay for brick to repair the breaches in the wall. But all would be useless, for the Almighty had decreed her downfall. The fire would devour the proud city, the sword do its havoc in cutting them off. Let them be as numerous as the cankerworm (see annotations of Joel 1:1-20, make thyself as many as the locusts, which come in immense swarms, and it will be all to no avail. Her great commerce, her merchant-princes, were a vast host, like the stars of heaven, but all would soon be devastated, as the cankerworm spoileth and then flies away. Their crowned ones, the chiefs in authority, would all be scattered just as the sun-rise scatters the locusts and swarms of grasshoppers to a place unknown. Their shepherds, the leaders and rulers, under the King of Assyria, would sleep in death, while the population wandered homeless over the mountains, with none to gather them.

Nineveh's ruin is complete and irreparable. All who hear of her fall rejoice and clap their hands.

Prophecies in Nahum

Nahum lived about 2600 years ago. He was a native of Elkosh (about 20 miles southwest of Jerusalem). The Bible's book of Nahum is short in length and consists almost entirely of a prophecy of Nineveh's destruction. It is believed that Nahum wrote his book about two years before Nineveh was destroyed in 612 BC.

Nineveh at that time was the capital of the Assyrian Empire, which was one of the most powerful empires of the ancient world. The Assyrians conquered the kingdom of Israel in about 722 BC, about 2700 years ago. The conquest was as ruthless and cruel as it was devastating.

Nahum explains that because of Assyria's pride and cruelty in their destruction of Israel, and because of their idolatry, treachery, superstition, and injustice, their empire would be destroyed as punishment. In 612 BC (about 2600 years ago), a coalition of Babylonians, Scythians and Medes conquered Nineveh.

Although we do not know exactly when the book of Nahum was written, we do know that it contains some long-term prophecies that we can see as being fulfilled even today. For example, Nahum said that Nineveh's destruction would be final, and that the city would never again regain the greatness that it once had, and that Nineveh would never again be able to cause problems for Israel.

As we can see today, Nahum was right. Nineveh was never again a world power. And today, it is little more than an archaeological site. In contrast, Israel is again a nation, and a relatively prosperous one at that.

God's holiness, justice and power are the foundation of the Nahum's prophetic book. God rules over all the earth, even over those who do not acknowledge Him. Along with Nahum's writings about the destruction of Nineveh, there is also a message of hope shines through. God is slow to anger (Nahum 1:3) and good (Nahum 1:7) and offers good tidings to those who want His blessings (Nahum 1:15).

Nahum 1:10

Ninevites would be drunk in their final hours

Nahum 1:14

Ninevites would be wiped out

Nahum 3:15

Nineveh would be destroyed by fire

Nahum 3:17

Nineveh's army officers would desert

Nahum 3:19

Nineveh would be destroyed, permanently

Why is Nahum's prophecy very particular on Nineveh, an ancient capital city of Assyria? The Book of Nahum is special because it is the only book of prophecies which reveals the place where the Antichrist will come from.

Nahum 1:11

11 From you, [O Nineveh,] has one come forth who plots evil against the LORD and counsels wickedness.

This very short verse explains why God's anger was centered on this city. At the same time, giving hope to the people of Israel that God's mercy will be forthcoming. Israel will be rescued from the one who counsels wickedness. This place is the origin of the Antichrist but God promised Nineveh will be defeated,

that the Antichrist will meet his downfall. Yet, it is God's purpose to use Assyria to punish His own people. We will borrow this verse in Isaiah:

Isaiah 10:5-6

"Woe to the Assyrian, the rod of my anger, in whose hand is the club of my wrath! I send him against a godless nation [Israel], I dispatch him against a people who anger me.

Israel is punished because of their sins. I have discussed many transgressions of Israel as well as of all the nations in my past topics which I don't need to write them here again. After the punishment against Israel is completed, then God's anger will subside and will turn His wrath against the king of Assyria, the man from Nineveh, the Antichrist. It is important to continue Isaiah's prophecy to understand completely the prophecy of Nahum.

Isaiah 10:12-14

12 When the Lord has finished all his work against Mount Zion and Jerusalem, he will say, "I will punish the king of Assyria for the willful pride of his heart and the haughty look in his eyes. 13 For he [Assyrian] says:

"By the strength of my hand I have done this, and by my wisdom, because I have understanding. I removed the boundaries of nations, I plundered their treasures; like a mighty one I subdued their kings. 14 As one reaches into a nest, so my hand reached for the wealth of the nations; as men gather abandoned eggs, so I gathered **all the countries**; not one flapped a wing, or opened its mouth to chirp."

Here, Isaiah continues to explain God's reason of using the Assyrian (would-be Antichrist) to punish Israel. However, it turns out that this ruler went on to conquer **all the countries** as well. He becomes conceited attributing this feat to his own power which. In the next verse, Isaiah 10:15, God is saying, that the authority and power came from God.

Now it is clearer why Nineveh plays a big role in the last days. Once he becomes the Antichrist, he will change his role from Assyrian to the symbolic Babylonian king who will invade Judah, now Israel.

Once you read the two topics mentioned above, it becomes clear why God had promised to Judah:

"Celebrate your festivals, O Judah, and fulfill your vows. No more will the wicked [Antichrist and his followers] invade you; they will be completely destroyed."

God was punishing Nineveh because the ruler who will come from that city will soon become the Antichrist, the symbolic Babylonian king who will destroy Judah and Jerusalem.

The Army of God

Chapter 2 of Nahum describes the attacker of Nineveh.

Nahum 2:2

An attacker [God's army] advances against you, [Nineveh]. Guard the fortress, watch the road, brace yourselves, marshal all your strength!

More description on God's army...

Nahum 2:3-4

3 The shields of his soldiers are red; the warriors are clad in scarlet. The metal on the chariots flashes on the day they are made ready; the spears of pine are brandished. 4 The chariots storm through the streets, rushing back and forth through the squares. They look like flaming torches; they dart about like lightning.

Through His army, God will restore the splendor of Jacob. Note that this is for the whole tribe of Jacob, not only for the House of Judah nor for the House of Israel only.

Nahum 2:2

2 The LORD will restore the splendor of Jacob like the splendor of Israel, though destroyers have laid them waste and have ruined their vines.

The Fatal Wound

The rest of Chapter 2 details the punishment of Nineveh, the strength of the Antichrist. Chapter 3 details the sins of Nineveh. I would like to put emphasis on the last two verses of the Book of Nahum.

Nahum 3:18-19

*18 O king of Assyria, your shepherds slumber; your nobles lie down to rest. Your people are scattered on the mountains with no one to gather them. 19 **Nothing can heal your wound; your injury is fatal.** Everyone who hears the news about you claps his hands at your fall, for who has not felt your endless cruelty?*

The wound, the fatal wound is the most significant injury mentioned in the Bible. This fatal wound is again mentioned in the Book of Revelation prophesying about one of the heads of the beast having a fatal wound and was healed.

Revelation 13:3

*3 One of the heads of the beast seemed to **have had a fatal wound** , **but the fatal wound had been healed.** The whole world was astonished and followed the beast.*

Also in Revelation 13:12-13

*12 He exercised all the authority of the first beast on his behalf, and made the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast, **whose fatal wound had been healed.** 13 And he performed great and miraculous signs, even causing fire to come down from heaven to earth in full view of men.*

The wound being healed is describing death then being resurrected and is also described this way:

Revelation 17:8

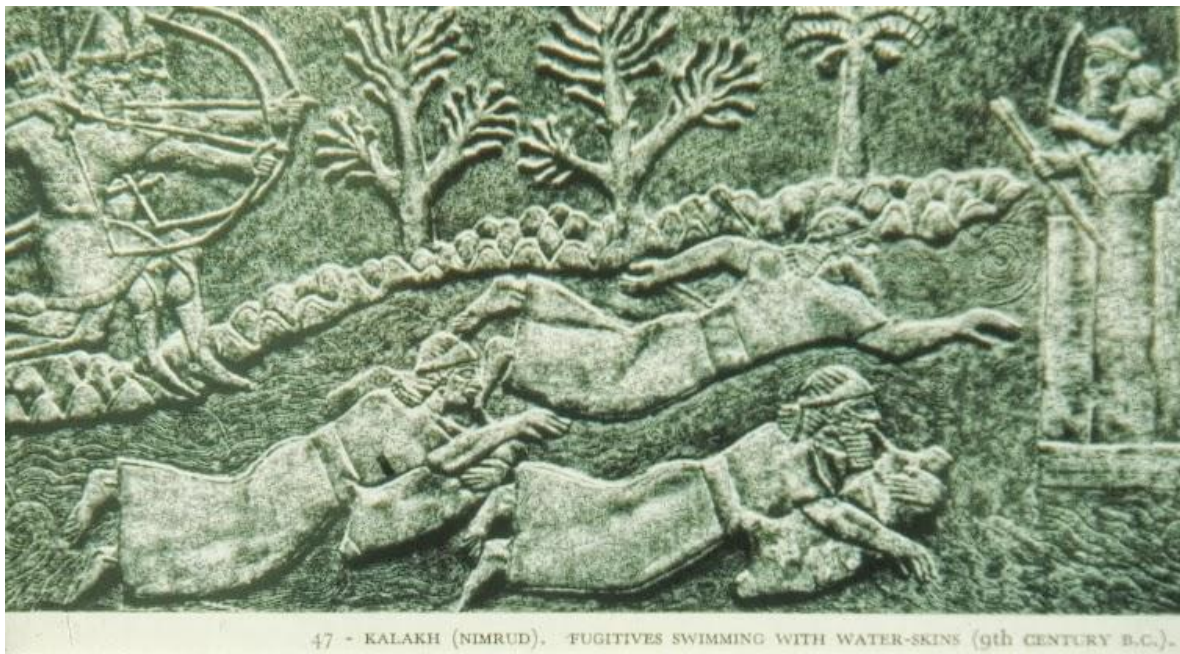
*8 The beast, which you saw, **once was , now is not, and will come up out of the Abyss [Death]** and go to his destruction. The inhabitants of the earth whose names have not been written in the book of life from the creation of the world will be astonished when they see the beast, because **he once was , now is not, and yet will come.***

Well, that is exactly how the House of Israel fell then followed by the fall of the House of Judah. The Assyrians conquered the House of Israel. But when they tried to attack Jerusalem, King Sennacherib's army was annihilated by God's angel and the king died days later. In the last days, this symbolic Assyrian king will do the same to confirm the covenant, he will die short of conquering Israel but will rise again to become the symbolic Babylonian king. Then, later as the

cruel Pharaoh (Isa 19:4) to complete his mission not only of defeating Israel but also the USA, the modern Egypt, and then conquering the entire world. All the world will feel his *endless cruelty* in the end.

What God is saying above is that, the fatal wound is actually beyond cure. Although the symbolic Assyrian king from Nineveh will resurrect mimicking the resurrection of Jesus Christ (as he will declare himself as the real "Messiah"), he will eventually go to his destruction (Rev 17:8,11).

Now you see that the Book of Nahum although short is very interesting and meaningful. It is a book of prophecy not a history. However, we need to read other prophecies to understand it better. We need also to be well aware of the history of Israel and understand that history is just repeating itself for the last seven years before the Second Coming.



Assyrians cross a river on inflated skins to attack a walled city

Commentary on the Book Habakkuk

Introduction

There is a very interesting diversity among these Minor Prophets. Hosea starts with the command of the Lord for a symbolical action to show Israel her spiritual whoredoms. Joel plunges in at once to describe the judgment of the land by the locusts and leads on to the day of the Lord. Amos begins with the announcement of the judgment of the surrounding nations, while Obadiah is

chiefly concerned with the judgment of Edom. Jonah is different from all the rest in his miraculous experience, while Micah has a character of his own. Nahum, as we saw, has the one great message of the doom of Nineveh, and brings comfort to God's people. Habakkuk again is different from all the rest. In nature God displays as Creator a wonderful diversity, and so in His revelation His Spirit uses every instrument in His own way, as it pleases Him.

Of Habakkuk the same holds good as with most of the other minor prophets; we know nothing of the particulars of his life. It does not matter much. God knows these holy men, whom He called to make known His will and the future, and He has kept the record of their lives, as He keeps the record of all of our lives.

His name means "to embrace," but it has the double meaning "to embrace" and "being embraced." He embraced his own people and embraced God in prayer, then "being embraced"--God answered him. Dr. Martin Luther gave a very striking definition of his name, which cannot be improved upon. "Habakkuk signifies an embracer, or one who embraces another, takes him into his arms. He embraces his people, and takes them to his arms, i.e., he comforts them and holds them up, as one embraces a weeping child, to quiet it with the assurance that if God wills it shall soon be better."

It has been assumed that he probably sprang, like Jeremiah and Ezekiel, from a priestly family, for at the end of the great ode, at the conclusion of the book, he states--"to the chief singer on my stringed instruments," from which we may gather that he was officially qualified to take part of the temple service. But Isaiah 38:20 seems to contradict this.

An apocryphal book, "Bel and the Dragon," states that Habakkuk was miraculously transported to Daniel, who had been cast a second time to the lions by Cyrus. This and other legends are without any foundation at all, and need not be examined, for they are worthless.

The Date of Habakkuk

As it is with Nahum, so it is with Habakkuk, the superscription does not fix a definite date, but the contents of the book do not leave us in doubt about the time when this man of God prophesied.

In the sixth verse of the opening chapter we read, "For, lo, I raise up the Chaldeans, that bitter and hasty nation, which shall march through the breadth of the land, to possess the dwelling places that are not theirs." He therefore prophesied at the time when the Chaldeans, or as they are also called the Babylonians, were coming into power, and soon to be used against the house of

Judah, as the Assyrian was used in judgment with the house of Israel. He prophesied during the reign of Josiah, that is at the very close of his reign, and a few years before Nineveh was destroyed, which elevated the Babylonians to the place of prominence. Some have put the date into the reign of Manasseh, the father of Josiah, but this is too early. Josiah died on the battlefield, and after his son Jehoahaz had reigned three months, Pharaoh-necho, who had slain Josiah, made Eliakim, the son of Josiah, king over Judah, and gave him the name of Jehoiakim. (See 2 Kings 23:28-37.)

The Message of Habakkuk

The language which Habakkuk used is extremely beautiful. Professor Delitzsch speaks of it as follows: "His language is classical throughout, full of rare and select turns and words, which are to some extent exclusively his own, whilst his view and mode of presentation bear the seal of independent force and finished beauty. Notwithstanding the violent rush and lofty soaring of the thoughts, his prophecy forms a finely organized and artistically rounded whole. Like Isaiah, he is, comparatively speaking, much more independent of his predecessors, both in contents and form, than any of the other prophets." "Everything reflects the time when prophecy was in its greatest glory, when the place of the sacred lyrics, in which the religious life had expressed itself, was occupied, through a still mightier inter-position on the part of God, by prophetic poetry with its trumpet voice." Much in his message is in the form of communion with the Lord. He begins with the familiar heart-cry, "O LORD, how long shall I cry?" He receives an answer, which announces the coming of the Chaldeans, to which again the prophet replies. Then he said, "I will stand upon my watch, and will set me upon the tower, and will watch and see what He will say unto me" (chapter 2). Then he receives another answer. The judgment of Judah by the Chaldeans as well as the overthrow of the Chaldeans, on account of the deification of their power, is the prophetic message with which he starts.

Sublime is the great lyric ode contained in the third chapter, which begins with a prayer (chapter 3). It is one of the greatest descriptions of the theophany, the coming of the Lord, which the Spirit of God has given. He comes in glory and in wrath; the wicked are overthrown, His people are saved. It waits for its great fulfillment when our Lord Jesus Christ shall be revealed from heaven in flaming fire with His holy angels.

The Division of Habakkuk

The division is very simple. Chapter 1 forms the first part and gives the coming invasion of Judah by the Chaldeans. In chapter 2 the "woe" is pronounced upon

the Chaldeans and their destruction is predicted. The third chapter contains the vision of the coming of the Lord, with which all the ungodly world powers terminate, and the dominion of the Gentiles ends.

Chapter 1

1. Judah's judgment by the Chaldeans

The Judgment of Judah Through the Chaldeans Announced

1. The prophet's cry to Jehovah (Habakkuk 1:1-4)

2. The answer (Habakkuk 1:5-11)

3. The prophet's plea (Habakkuk 1:12-17)

Verses 1-4. Problem: why the Lord had not judged Judah's sin

Habakkuk 1:1-4. The prophet begins his message with a prayer-cry to Jehovah. He whose name is "the embracer" embraces the Lord and cries to Him on account of the conditions prevailing in Judah. The Spirit of God stirred up the heart of Habakkuk on account of the moral conditions in Judah. He is jealous for Jehovah's glory, which manifested itself in hating the evil. "There is no prophetic delivery among the twelve lesser books more peculiar and characteristic than that of Habakkuk. It has no longer the occupation with the enemy as its main feature, although the enemy is referred to; but for its prominent topic we find the soul of the prophet, as representing the faithful among Judah, brought into deep exercise, and indeed a kind of colloquy between God Himself and the prophet, so as to set out not only that which gave him trouble of heart, but also divine comfort, as well as into exulting hope into which he was led by the communications of the Spirit of God."

Like Jeremiah, the weeping prophet, Habakkuk is deeply stirred on account of the declension among the people of God, and that led him to cry to Jehovah, to tell Him all about it. He begins with "How long, O LORD." It is the cry of the saints of God in all generations. We, too, in the midst of the increasing apostasy, the perilous times, cry to Him, "How long, O Lord." He had cried and there seemed to be no answer. Heaven was silent. And with him the righteous among the Jews had cried for help and for a change of conditions, under which they were suffering affliction. Wickedness and violence were evident on all sides. Strife and contention were the continued order of things. They injured each other wherever they could. The law of God was completely flouted; there was no more justice, and the wicked compassed about the righteous.

Verses 5-11. The divine solution

Habakkuk 1:5-11. Jehovah speaks and answers the complaint of His servant. He is going to raise up the Chaldeans to chastise His wayward people. The Lord is calling on His people, that they should see now what He was going to do. “Behold ye among the nations, and regard, and wonder marvellously; for I work a work in your days, which ye will not believe though it were told you.” The meaning is that they should look around among the nations, the faithless ones among the Jews, and see how the storm would gather and ultimately break over the head of the house of Judah. He would work a judgment work, which they would not believe, it would be an unparalleled occurrence, amazing and terrible. This passage is quoted by the Apostle Paul in Acts 13:41 and applied to the unbelievers and despisers of the gospel. In the quotation the Spirit of God led the Apostle to omit the address to the nations, and substituted for it “Ye despisers.” While in Habakkuk’s day God was about to work a work of judgment, which the unbelievers would not believe when they heard of it, we note that Paul preached the gospel; he has reference to speaking to the Jews in the synagogue; preached the gospel unto them, and they did not believe. Then He worked a work which they would not believe, in sending that gospel far hence to the Gentiles Acts 28:1-31 while the unbelieving Jews would be dispersed among the nations.

In verse 6 the instrument of chastisement is announced, and afterward described. A new power would arise, the Chaldeans. They would make an invasion, and possess dwelling places which were not theirs, that is, they would set out for a widespread conquest and take away the dwelling place of Judah. They were to be the instrument in the hand of God to mete out judgment to the Jews and humble them, as well as other nations. The Chaldeans, called in Hebrew Hakhadsim were of Semitic origin, springing from Kesed, the son of Nahor, and brother of Abraham Genesis 22:22. Jeremiah, who also announced the Chaldean invasion, speaks of them in the following manner: “Lo, I will bring a nation upon you from afar, O house of Israel, saith the LORD, it is a mighty nation, an ancient nation, a nation whose language thou knowest not, neither understandest what they say. Their quiver is an open sepulchre, they are all mighty men. And they shall eat up thine harvest, and thy bread, which thy sons and thy daughters should eat, they shall eat up thy flocks and thine herds, they shall eat up thy vines and thy fig trees; they shall impoverish thy fenced cities, wherein thou trustest, with the sword. Nevertheless, in those days, saith the LORD, I will not make an end of you” Jeremiah 5:15-31. Their terrible onslaught is here compared to the swiftness of the leopards, their fierceness with the prowling evening wolves, and their horsemen in their dash with the eagle’s flight. They come for violence and know no defeat, for their faces are always forward. They

make prisoners like the sand, and mock all attempts to check their advance; kings and princes are ridiculed and all strongholds are quickly reduced.

But as he is victorious the Chaldean becomes proud and forgets that he was but used as an instrument in the hand of God to deal with those who had done evil. As a result, they imputed their power to their own god, and do not give God the honor and the glory. His own might is his god. Then comes the day when the Lord takes the Chaldean in hand for judgment and deals with him, as He dealt with other nations. Nebuchadnezzar, the first great king of Babylon, after his humiliating experience, acknowledged the God of heaven, but his grandson Belshazzar praised the Babylonian idol-gods, at his licentious feast, dishonoring the temple vessels. Then followed the judgment of the Chaldeans in the overthrow of Babylon.

Verses 12-17. Problem: why the wicked Chaldeans were used to punish Judah

Habakkuk 1:12-17. The prophet had listened to the terrible announcement from the lips of Jehovah, what was to befall his nation. How it must have shocked the man of God! But he knows the comfort and expresses it in faith at once. "Art Thou not from everlasting, O Jehovah, my God, my Holy One? we shall not die!" He knows Jehovah as the faithful God, the covenant-keeping God. Such a God will surely not permit the nation, to whom He has pledged His Word, to be wiped out. His faith lays hold on that and he realizes that the Lord is using this enemy for correction, to chastise His people. And furthermore in his plea he says, "Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, Thou canst not look upon injustice." Would He, the righteous God, look on unconcerned at the wicked deeds of the Chaldeans? Can He remain silent to all their deeds of violence? If such is the case, the prophet asks next, "Why lookest Thou upon the treacherous; why art Thou silent when the wicked destroys?" It is the voice of the godly remnant here, seen suffering with the nation. It brings before us the same question concerning the suffering of the righteous.

The Chaldean took men as if they were fishes, as a fisherman puts out the net and the drag, so they catch men by the net and the drag. Gathering in the people with their wealth, he rejoices and is glad. Then the prophet takes up the statement given by the Lord that the Chaldean would offend, and fall by his pride, and the worship of his false gods, he sacrifices to his net; he burns incense; he makes the thing which prospers him his idol, his god. Is this then to go on continually? Shall he who empties his net, and throws it out to catch more, to do this again with the nations forever?

Such was the plea of Habakkuk, after the announcement of the coming chastisement of the Jews by the Chaldeans. He knows that the affliction could not continue forever, for God is a covenant-keeping God, and of purer eyes than to behold evil, a holy and a righteous God.

Chapter 2

2. The Lord's solution – judgment of the Chaldeans

The Ungodliness of the Chaldeans and Their Destruction

1. The waiting prophet and the message he received (Habakkuk 2:1-4)

2. The five-fold woe upon the Chaldeans (Habakkuk 2:5-20)

Verses 1-5. A righteous remnant to be preserved

Habakkuk 2:1-4. It seems there was no immediate answer to the plea of the prophet. He then speaks to himself and expresses his attitude. "I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and I will wait to see what He will say to me, and what I shall answer as to my complaint." He watches like a sentinel upon a watchtower for the answer the Lord will give him. It does not mean that the prophet actually ascended a tower, but he expresses his innermost attitude by the symbol of the watchman. He remained silent and eagerly looked for the reply.

How long he waited is not stated. But the answer came, for the Lord never disappoints His inquiring and waiting servants. He is told to write the vision and make it plain upon the tablets, that he may run that readeth it. Thus the Lord spoke to him and gave him the vision, which he was to write in plain characters upon tablets. The effect should be not that he that runneth may read (as it is sometimes misquoted) but that he that readeth may run. The prophetic Word is always plain. It is far from being the deep and complicated portion of God's truth that some make it, but it needs an ear opened by the Spirit of God. Prophecy believed is a great stimulating agent to Christian service, even as it is stated here, that the reader of the vision runs to spread the message.

In the next place we hear of the certainty of the vision. It is for the appointed time. It hastes toward the end, and shall not lie. The prophet is commanded to wait for it, though it tarry, and then receives the assurance that it will surely come and not tarry. These are important instructions by which many a believer might profit. God has an appointed time for all His purposes and their fulfillment. He cannot be hastened, for His schedule was made before the

foundation of the world. When the appointed time comes all visions will be accomplished. It hastens toward the end. That end is the end of the times of the Gentiles, which began with the rising of the Babylonians, and the first great king, Nebuchadnezzar, the golden head in the prophetic image of Daniel 2:1-49. When the end of the times of the Gentiles comes, the world-power then, final Babylon as revealed in the last book of the Bible, will be judged and the Lord will be manifested in all His glory. The prophet's business is, as well as that of every believer, to wait for it and not be disturbed if there is delay, for the assurance is given that it will surely come and not tarry. And here faith can rest.

Part of this is quoted in the Epistle to the Hebrews. "For yet a little while, and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry" Hebrews 10:37. From this quotation we learn that the vision which will surely come is a person, the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the center of every vision and without Him there is no vision. The Septuagint translation is the same: "If He tarry wait for Him, for coming He will come and not delay."

In the fourth verse, which may properly be taken to be the opening statement for the vision which follows, the all importance of faith in the vision is made known. The proud one who is mentioned must primarily be applied to the haughty Chaldean, but it is equally true of the unbelieving, proud Jew, and of the nominal Christian. The proud, the puffed up one, his soul is not right within him, and God resisteth the proud, while he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

"But the just shall live by faith." Criticism has not left this matchless sentence untouched. The higher critic Davidson labors to show that the Hebrew word for faith (Emunoh) means faithfulness, dealing in faithfulness in money matters, that is, one who deals honestly. According to his statement the verse means if an Israelite, or anybody else, does right he will live. But in Genesis we read, "Abraham believed the LORD and He counted it to him for righteousness." As every intelligent Christian knows, there was no law then, and the New Testament in the testimony of the Holy Spirit makes it plain that this is the gospel of grace in which the ungodly are justified; justified by faith. Interesting is the quotation of the sentence "the just shall live by faith" in the three passages of the New Testament Epistles. Romans 1:17 quotes this sentence. In this passage the emphasis is upon the word "just." The theme of Romans is the righteousness of God, at least in the opening chapters. It shows how a person, a lost and guilty sinner, becomes righteous, and as such is saved. "For by grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast."

In Galatians 3:11 the emphasis is upon the word “faith.” “But no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, as it is evident: for, the just shall live by faith.”

In Hebrews 10:38 the emphasis is upon “live.” “For yet a little while, and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry. Now the just shall live by faith, but if any man draw back, My soul shall have no pleasure in him.”

Verses 6-19. The Chaldeans themselves shall be punished

Verse 20. The sovereign Lord is ruling

Habakkuk 2:5-20. The Lord uncovers the wicked conditions prevailing among the Chaldeans. God had allowed the people whom He loved to be chastised by an evil instrument; they were to be crushed by injustice and by the actions of the cruel invader. But the character and conduct of the oppressor, the Chaldeans, was not unknown to Him, as the prophet expressed it, “Who is of purer eyes than to behold evil.” And now the righteous Lord announces the five-fold woe upon the wicked world-power. While all this applies primarily to the Chaldean, it is likewise a prophecy concerning the future. The world powers remain the same to the end of the times of the Gentiles. It was true then, as it is true now, and will be true in the future throughout this present age, “The world lieth in the Wicked One.” There is no improvement to be looked for among the world powers, and as we have seen so frequently in the study of the prophets, the end of the age brings still greater opposition and defiance of God, with a corresponding moral decline. We see therefore in these verses a description of the world conditions down to its very end. The word “wine” does not need to be interpreted in a literal way, though drunkenness was one of the sins of the Babylonians. They were inflamed with an ambition for conquest, as a drunken man is inflamed with wine. This intoxication made them treacherous, haughty, restless: like death, which is never satisfied, so they are never satisfied; constantly pressing on they spoil the nations, gather prisoners, and act in violence. How can God permit this to go unjudged?

Then follows a taunting song in Habakkuk 2:6-7. Divine retribution is coming for them. The spoiler is going to be spoiled. It is the retribution which may be read in all history, which still continues, for of nations it is true as of individuals, “Whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap.”

The second woe is on account of their covetousness and their self aggrandizement. Like Edom, they were possessed by an abominable pride to make their nest high, they imagine self-security, thinking they can avert “the power of evil.” But their proud plans were to result in shame; their security

would end in collapse and confusion. It is well known how Nebuchadnezzar manifested this spirit. One day this proud monarch walked in the palace of the kingdom of Babylon. "The king spake and said, Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom, by the might of my power and for the honor of my majesty?" The humiliation which came upon the king is prophetic. Thus the Lord will humble the proud world-power into the dust Daniel 4:1-37.

Then comes a third woe. Habakkuk 2:12-14 are of special interest, for they give us a picture of a godless civilization and its appointed end. Their cruel oppression, their ungodly gains, had built up a magnificent city. Excavations have shown what a marvelous civilization was in force when Babylon was mistress of the world. But the foundations of it all were iniquity and the blood of victims. Is it any better today? We have seen the top-notch of a boasted civilization, steeped in iniquity and defiance of God, suddenly collapsing and producing a war of horrors and cruelty which makes the conquests and atrocities of the Chaldeans pale into insignificance.

And how true it is today, "The peoples labor for the fire, the nations weary themselves for vanity." The day is approaching when this civilization will be swept away, and before the better things come, the kingdom is established and He reigns whose right it is, there will be the fires of judgment. And after that it will be true, as it cannot be true before, "The earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea."

The fourth woe shows the corruption which held sway in the Babylonian empire. Drunkenness here is a figure of the utter prostration of the nations which the Chaldeans had conquered; they stripped them in their wicked endeavors of all they possessed. They spread a shameless dissolution in every direction. For this they will have to drink the cup of fury from the hand of the Lord, and shall be covered with vile shame, so that their glory will be blotted out.

The fifth woe is on account of their idolatry. They worshipped wood and stone. Nebuchadnezzar set up his golden image in the plain of Dura and demanded worship for it. The spiritual Babylon, Rome, is a well-organized system of idolatry which goes on undiminished. Finally the age ends in idolatry, for the image of the beast of Revelation 13:1-18 is still future.

"But the LORD is in His holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before Him." First, by way of contrast, their idols are dumb; Jehovah, the God of Israel, is the living God. He is in His holy temple; from there He takes notice of the doings of men. He is the Sovereign, the only Potentate; the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance Isaiah 40:15. "It is He

that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers; that stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in” Isaiah 40:22.

But this closing verse of the chapter of woe has a prophetic meaning. When at last the world-power is dethroned, when the Lord returns, He will take His place as King of Kings. He will be in His holy temple, and then all the earth will keep silence before Him.

Chapter 3

3. Vision of the Lord’s coming and kingdom

The Vision of the Coming of the Lord

- 1. The prophet’s prayer (Habakkuk 3:1-2)*
- 2. The coming of the Lord for judgment and redemption (Habakkuk 3:3-15)*
- 3. The effect upon the prophet (Habakkuk 3:16-19)*

Verses 1-2. The prophet’s prayer

Verses 3-15. The coming of the Lord as judge and warrior

Habakkuk 3:1-2. Once more we hear the voice of the man of God in prayer. Shigionoth is the plural of Shiggaion, and is found in the superscription of Psalms 7:1-17. Its meaning is “loud crying.” The connection with the seventh Psalm is interesting. In that Psalm God appeared to David as the God of judgment, the righteous God who must save His righteous people and condemn the wicked. (See Annotations on Psalms 7:1-17.) The prophet had listened to the message and penned it as we have it in the preceding chapter. It struck terror to his heart and he trembled. Therefore he pleads for a revival of the Lord’s work in the midst of the years. He must have taken a hasty glance over the past history of his people, how God had worked in their behalf in Egypt, redeemed them, led them forth, and the many evidences of the display of His power in behalf of the elect nation. And now, in the midst of years, he asks a revival of this work, the interposition of Jehovah, that He may be known in His power. The text is often quoted in pleading a revival among the dead conditions of Christendom. But it is a revival of the work of the Lord in a very different sense of the word, as we have indicated.

He knows that wrath is on the way. Not only wrath for the Chaldeans, but for his people, that the unbelieving, the apostates, would also have to face the judgment. Therefore he pleads, "In wrath remember mercy." Such is the way of God always. Judgment is His strange work, and mercy is mingled with His judgments. It will be so in connection with the winding up of this present age, when judgment wrath sweeps over the earth, and especially Israel's land; He then will have mercy upon His people. The time of wrath will be His time of mercy, the covenant mercies promised to Israel. "Thou shalt arise and have mercy upon Zion, for the time to favor her, yea, the set time, is come." And when will that be? When the Lord shall build up Zion; He shall appear in His glory Psalms 102:13-28.

The great inspired ode which follows is one of the greatest sections of prophecy. It is a wonderful theophany the Spirit of God describes. Wrath and mercy are manifested, so that it is an answer to the prophet's plea. "In wrath remember mercy."

It has been said, "The poet describes a great storm, advancing from the south, the region of Paran and Sinai. In the dark storm clouds he conceives Jehovah to be concealed; the lightning flashes which illumine heaven and earth disclose glimpses of the dazzling brightness immediately about him; the earth quakes, the hills sink, and the neighbouring desert tribes look on in dismay" (Canon Driver). Thus higher criticism, reduces one of the sublimest inspired prophecies, concerning the future appearing of the Lord, to the level of poetry.

The great description of His coming must be linked with similar prophecies Deuteronomy 33:22; Psalms 18:8-50; Psalms 18:33-50; Psalms 68:8; Psalms 68:34; Psalms 77:17-20. The great ode, cast in the form of a Psalm, begins with the statement that God cometh from Teman and the Holy One from Mount Paran. Moses in his prophetic blessing also begins with a similar declaration. "The LORD came from Sinai, and rose from Seir unto them; He shined from Mount Paran, and He came with the thousands of His saints (angels); from His right hand went a fiery law for them." Just as He was manifested when He had redeemed them out of Egypt, and constituted them His Kingdom people at Sinai Exodus 19:1-25, so will He appear again to deliver the remnant of His people from the dominion of the world-power, and judge them as He judged Egypt. He comes from the direction of Edom, for Teman is the southern district of Idumea, while Paran is more southward. Isaiah also beheld him advancing from the same direction. "Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah?" Isaiah 63:1-19. It is unfortunate that the Authorized Version has "God came from Teman," when it is "God cometh," not a past but a future event. After this opening statement the first Selah is put. This means to pause and to lift

up. We are to pause and meditate, and then to lift up our hearts and voices in praise and thanksgiving. It is found seventy-one times in the Psalms and three times in this chapter of Habakkuk.

His glory covers the heavens, while the earth is filled with His praise. Heaven and earth reflect the glory of the Coming One. How all this corresponds with the divine statements concerning His coming in the New Testament does not need to be pointed out. He comes in power and great glory, in the clouds of heaven, as Daniel beheld Him in the night vision, and as our Lord testified Himself. Brightness fills the sky as He appears in person, while out of His hand glory rays emanate, the hiding of His power. The picture is evidently taken from the rising sun, which shoots forth great rays, heralding its ascending. As Delitzsch remarks, "His hand" means in a general sense, as signifying the hand generally, and not a single hand only. May we not have here a hint of His hands pierced once, but now emanating glory? Before Him goes the pestilence, indicating the trouble which precedes His coming, when the four apocalyptic riders bring war, famine, pestilence, and death in judgment for this earth.

With the sixth verse He draws nearer. Up to this point in the theophany He is described as coming forth, like the sun out of His chamber, heaven and earth reflecting His glory, but now He stands and measures the earth; He looks and the nations tremble, while all creation is affected, and earthquakes shake down the mountains.

Then the prophet sees the tents of Cushan in affliction and the curtains of Midian tremble. Cushan means the Ethiopians, and the Midianites inhabited the Arabian coast along the Red Sea. The past is seen as a prophecy of the future. As He once came at Sinai, when the mountains shook and the hills trembled, and as once the tidings of the Red Sea disaster inspired terror among the neighboring nations, so will it be, only on a larger scale, when He comes in great power and glory.

The verses which follow (Habakkuk 3:8-15) are in the form of an address to God. The rivers and the seas, and the mountains feel His wrath; they represent symbolically the nations and the world-powers. He is seen marching in anger through the earth and in His fury treading down the nations. It is a majestic picture the Spirit of God gives of that coming day of wrath and judgment.

But while He comes thus, executing wrath and judgment upon the ungodly, He comes in mercy. He goes forth for the salvation of His people, for the salvation of Thine anointed, that is, the elect nation and the God-fearing, waiting remnant of the last days Psalms 105:15. And there will be on the earth in that day the

head of the house of the wicked, the ungodly head, the man of sin, the heading up of all apostasy and opposition to God. His doom is predicted in Habakkuk 3:13, followed by another Selah, like Habakkuk 3:3 and Habakkuk 3:9.

Verses 16-19. The effect of the theophany upon the prophet

Habakkuk 3:16-19. The prophet now speaks of his own feeling, which reflects the feeling of the godly among the Jews when this great theophany becomes history. There is fear and trembling in view of the coming tribulation. When he heard it he trembled; he is completely prostrated. He desires rest in the day of trouble, the day when the final enemy of God's people marches through the land. Then faith is triumphant, and in one of the most magnificent outbursts the prophet declares his confidence in his God (Habakkuk 3:17). Such will be the faith of the godly who pass through the time of great trouble. Finally he rejoices in the God of his salvation and declares his hope that his feet will be like hinds' feet to escape to the high places. Even so the remnant of Israel will be delivered. We leave the application to the Church-saints with the reader.

Messianic Prophecies in Habakkuk

Habakkuk Prophecy about Paul

There is a good reason to believe Habakkuk 2:2-5 from 610 BC is a prophecy about Paul and Paulinism. While we have all been taught to see this passage is teaching about justification by faith, this is incorrect. Paul pulled a verse out of context when the words "the just shall live by HIS faith" meant to talk about the just living by the FAITH of an end-times figure who is a man of pride whose spirit was not right within himself and who tries to draw all GENTILES / NATIONS to himself in competition with God.

The man's faith (*i.e., Jesus is Messiah, Son of God*) is right, but his mission was adverse to God.

The context of Habakkuk from which Paul draws actually begins with God saying this is a prophecy, and it will surely happen, and "wait for it." Here is the introduction to 2:2-5:

This *vision is for a future time*.

It describes the end, and it will be fulfilled.

If it seems slow in coming, wait patiently,
for it will surely take place.

It will not be delayed. (Habakkuk 2:3)

Several scholars point out how incongruous therefore was Paul's use of the verse at 2:4 as a doctrine. Paul used it as a doctrine rather than a depiction of how the just shall live by "his" steadfast faith -- the faith of the haughty one who will draw all the Gentiles to himself:

Habakkuk 2:4 has often been taken as espousing *a pan-historical principle of salvation by faith*, but this *overlooks the fact that Habakkuk 2:4 is a prophecy of the end times*. In order to understand this better, we need to pay attention to the flow of the book of Habakkuk. (Paul's use of Habakkuk 2:4.)

Habakkuk 2:4 occurs in Yahweh's answer to Habakkuk... This answer is **actually a vision** that is to be written down (2:2). According to 2:3, it is a vision that concerns the time of the end. In other words, Habakkuk 2:2-20 is an *eschatological prophecy*. The core of the vision is Habakkuk 2:4. At the time of the end, *there would be someone whose soul was puffed up and not upright.... (Id.)*

Thus, before we study this passage, realize now that how you have been trained to read it is based upon none other than Paul's misreading of the context. How interesting then that in context, this appears to be a prophecy about Paul -- and even, as we will see, identifies the person's name as SAUL --- that is, the Hebrew letters SHL identify the one whom draws all "GENTILES / NATIONS" to himself in competition with God.

Thus, prayerfully examine whether this prophecy is actually a prophecy about Saul-Paul -- the so-called Apostle to the Gentiles.

First: Saul and Sheol are Spelled Identically In Hebrew

First, let's study the name *Saul*.

The name *Saul* is from the *Hebrew* word pronounced shaw-ool. It means "asked" or "prayed" in Hebrew. In a scholarly discussion of 1 Sam. 28 when Saul -- the anointed first king of Israel -- goes to see the witch of Endor, it is mentioned parenthetically "*Saul whose name is spelled like Sh'l as with the Hebrew name for Sheol, Sh'l.*" (Samuel Frost, "Sheol/Hades: What Is It?")

To understand this, we need to know in ancient Hebrew, the vowels are not used. Thus, the name Sheol and Saul in ancient Hebrew were written identically, and were distinguished only by context.

While it may be a coincidence, Strong's does establish that both Saul and Sheol come from the *same root word*. *Saul* is a passive participle of the word numbered 7592 in Strong's system. And *Sheol*, the grave, is "from 7592," Strong's says. Thus, *Saul* and *Sheol* have an identical derivation.

If one sees other more serious and blatant problems with Paul, then this name association of Paul with *Saul* and then by etymological association to *Sheol* may be a spiritual hint from our Lord. It alone proves nothing.

Habakkuk 2:5: Does it mention Saul-Paul?

However, one Paul critic says that the *sh'l* in Habakkuk 2:5 now could be translated as *Saul*, not Sheol/hell/grave. In 2:5, with this change, the verse would say: "Yea, also, because he transgresses by wine, he is *a proud man*, neither keepeth at home, who *enlarges his desire as SAUL* [sh'l] and is as death, and cannot be satisfied, but *garnereth unto him all nations* [i.e., GENTILES], and *heapeth unto him all people*."

If God did prophesy in one more place about Saul-Paul, we must listen. Let's now look at the broader context to see whether the passage as a whole is about Saul-Paul. As we read, bear in mind the passage states a vision experienced by the prophet Habakkuk. It was not a discussion of someone then alive in 610 BC.

Habakkuk 2:2-5

First, let's read this passage in the Dead Sea Scrolls translation -- the oldest version of the OT -- dating to 250 BC. Thus, this takes away any claim that this vision was edited into the OT to point at Paul after Paul's zenith period of 40-60 AD. Thus, below is the Dead Sea Scroll version unless there is bracketed text, and that text is from post-Paul manuscript evidence for the Original Testament.

The passage reads:

(2) And the Lord answered me, and said, "Write *the vision and make it plain* [on tablets] [that he may run] that reads it. (3) For the *vision is yet* [for the ap]pointed time, and it hastens [toward the end, and] shall not fail. Though [it] tarries [wait for it] because it will surely come; [it will not delay] (4) Behold *the proud one, his soul is not right* [within him], but the righteous shall live by *his faith* [or *his steadfastness*]. (5) [Yea, moreover, wine betrays] a *haughty man* so that he does not stay at home. He *enlarges his desire as SHL* [and he is as dea]th; he cannot be satisfied

[but gathers to him]self *all nations and collect[s] to himself all peoples*. ... (16) [You are] filled [with shame rather than] glory. [Dr]ink you also, and [be as one uncircumcised.]...(20) But the Lord is in His Holy Temple; let all the earth keep silence before Him." (*DSS Bible* (1999) at 460.)

This is first of all a vision, a revelation. The focus is a man of this stripe:

1. a "proud one"
2. whose "soul is not right within him"
3. but the "righteous [one] shall live by **HIS** faith," *i.e.*, the faith *espoused by this proud one / the steadfast beliefs of this proud one*
4. the "haughty one" does not "stay at home" *i.e.*, he travels
5. he "enlarges his desire *as* SAUL / SHEOL " - both his name and his character, *i.e.*, that which is "asked" and is "Sheol" which 'asks' for all of us one day
6. "he cannot be satisfied but gathers *all nations and collects to himself all peoples*." (v. 5)
7. he is circumcised, but his punishment to come is as one uncircumcised (v. 16) in rebuttal to the "haughty one," God says He is in His holy temple (v. 20).

Application to Paul

A. Proud Man?

Was Paul a proud man? He said that Satan gave him a thorn to keep him humble. (2 Cor. 12:7 "the messenger of Satan to buffet me.") Paul acknowledged pride was one of his weaknesses, oddly ascribing to Satan the good work of keeping him humble. (Ummm.) More important, Paul defines a proud man as anyone who contradicts the teachings of Jesus:

If any man gives different teaching, *not in agreement with the true words of our Lord Jesus Christ*, and with the teaching which is in agreement with true religion, He has *an over-high opinion of himself*; being without knowledge, having only an *unhealthy love of* questionings and *wars of words*, from which come envy, fighting, cruel words, evil thoughts, (I Tim. 6:3-4, Basic Bible in English.)

And we have established that many times Paul has specific teachings that clearly contradict those of Christ. Paul's statement that one who contradicts Christ is a proud man thus properly judges Paul himself. As Jesus said 'by your words you will be judged, and *by your words condemned*.'

Paul made numerous remarks that were boastful, full of pride -- yet amazingly had no shame doing so in letters to a spiritual community where Jesus had taught humility:

I Corinthians 14:18 I thank my God, ***I speak*** with tongues ***more than ye all***.

I Corinthians 15:10 But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but ***I laboured more abundantly than they all***: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.

II Corinthians 10:8 For though ***I should boast somewhat more*** of our authority, which the Lord hath given us for edification, and not for your destruction, ***I should not be ashamed***:

II Corinthians 11:23 Are they ministers (*i.e.*, the 12 apostles) of Christ? (I speak as a fool) ***I am more; in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft***.

And take a look at this verse where Paul takes the role of Christ away from Jesus, and bestows a passage talking about Jesus upon himself:

For so hath the ***Lord commanded us***, saying, ***I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles***, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth. (Acts 13:47)

Of course, this prophecy was not to be haughtily misread by any Christian as a command to "us" to be the "light of the Gentiles," but was a prophecy about a single person who God would glorify and hence "make" a "light FOR the Gentiles." We read in Isaiah 49:6:

"It is too small a thing for you to be my servant to restore the tribes of Jacob and bring back those of Israel I have kept. ***I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring my salvation to the ends of the earth***." (Isaiah 49:6)

Paul pridefully taught likewise about himself almost as if he, Paul, were the Messiah:

But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom *the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.* (Galatians 6:14.)

And aside from these proofs, if one has not noticed, Paul often speaks in very prideful tones. See 2 Cor. 11:16-22. One new reference I recently found is subtle but pay attention what action flattered Paul:

And my temptation which was in my flesh ye despised not, nor rejected; but *received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus.* Gal 4:14

Wouldn't a normal humble Christian be upset anyone mistook them as an angel or even as the Lord Jesus Christ? I think we would all be unhappy rather than pleased and complimentary to others who did so. Hence, this is just another example -- among many -- of Paul's pride -- a sin he admitted he had trouble controlling.

Hence, Paul was a man of pride by (a) contradicting Christ (1 Tim. 6:3-4); (b) boasting (1 Cor. 15:10; 2 Cor. 10:8; 11:16-22); and (c) by flattering himself in several ways -- (1) that he was commanded to be the "light **of** the Gentiles" in Isaiah 49:6 when instead the passage meant Christ alone was to be made by God the "light **for** the Gentiles;" (2) that Paul was "crucified unto the world" which is only true of Christ Himself; and (3) that some mistook Paul as an angel or even as Christ Jesus Himself (Gal. 4:14) when one should forsake any inadvertent pleasures from such misunderstandings.

B. A Soul Not Right In Himself?

Was Paul's soul not right in himself? Paul often sounded as if he had a sin problem, or exploited sinful acts under 'an-end-justifies-the-means' mentality: *I robbed* other churches, taking wages of them, to do you service. II Corinthians 11:8 (KJV)

But be it so, I did not myself burden you; but, being *crafty*, I *caught you with guile.* (2 Cor. 12:16)

This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save *sinners; of whom I am chief.* I Timothy 1:15 (KJV)

For if the truth of God hath more *abounded through my lie unto his glory*; why yet am I also judged as a sinner? Romans 3:7 (KJV)

The most important proof is Romans 7 where Paul says he is constantly beset by sin. While some resist this, the most straightforward reading of Romans 7 is that Paul admitted he was a carnal Christian. The main reason is Paul spoke in the present tense, and not about his past life. Paul says:

¹⁵For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; ***but what I hate, that do I.*** ¹⁶If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good. ¹⁷Now then it is no more I that do it, but ***sin that dwelleth in me.*** ¹⁸For ***I know that in me*** (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but ***how to perform that which is good I find not.*** ¹⁹For the good that I would I do not: but ***the evil which I would not, that I do.*** ²⁰Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but ***sin that dwelleth in me.*** ²¹I find then a law, that, when I would do good, ***evil is present with me.*** ²²For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: ²³But ***I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin*** which is in my members. ²⁴O wretched man that ***I am!*** who shall deliver me from the body of this death? ²⁵I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. ***So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.***

Others, such as Luther, Calvin and Augustine took this literally as talking of Paul's present struggles, and thus thought Paul was telling us the nature of the normal Christian life. (R. Kent Hughes, *Romans: A Righteousness from Heaven* (Crossway, 1991) at page 142) Hughes defends this traditional reading:

I believe this...view [of Luther, Calvin and Augustine] is correct, mainly because Paul continues to write in the first person singular ***but in the present tense.*** It seems ***most natural to understand this section as Paul talking about what he was then experiencing.*** Id. at 142.

Incidentally, this literal and traditional view was then used in our era to argue in favour of eternal security despite living as a carnal Christian.

'If Paul could do it, then why not me too?,' so went the argument. Hence, based upon *Romans 7:14-24*, if Paul lived a very *carnal sinful Christian life, and was saved, so we too can live.* Redpath, for example, said in reliance partly on *Romans 7:14-24*:

“The carnal Christian is a child of God, born again and on his way to heaven, but he is traveling third class.”

Thus this terrible example of Paul's morally conflicted life continues to harm the church.

More important, if read literally which is the traditional reading, then by Paul's own words, once more, we prove his soul was not right in himself.

C. The Just Shall Live By His Faith - The Faith Of This Proud Man Whose Spirit Is Not Right

Next, shall the righteous live by *the faith / steadfast beliefs Paul had*? Yes! Paul believed Jesus was Messiah and Son of God.

For several days he was with the disciples in Damascus, and immediately he began to proclaim Jesus in the synagogues, [Paul-Saul] saying, "He is the *Son of God*." (Acts 9:19-20)

"This *is the Messiah*, Jesus whom I am proclaiming to you." (Acts 17:2-3)

"To this day I have had help from God, and so I stand here, testifying to both small and great, *saying nothing but what the prophets and Moses said would take place*: that the Messiah must suffer, and that, by being the first to rise from the dead, he would proclaim light both to our people and to the Gentiles." (Acts 26:22-23)

The Paul portrayed by Luke is completely orthodox in his FAITH - Paul says "he *believes in all points of the Law*," (Acts 24:14); adds nothing to them (Acts 26:22-23) and his faith is simply Jesus "is the Son of God" and "Messiah." (Acts 9:19-20, 17:2-3.)

It was only in Paul's letters where he incorrectly taught a DOCTRINE about the impact / effect of such FAITH --- that it allowed him to be righteous without obedience to the Law, and, in most interpreters' eyes, without repentance and continuing obedience to any standard of righteousness. This was Paul's DOCTRINE about FAITH, but it was not his FAITH itself.

Thus, when we apply Habakkuk 2:2-5 to construe what aspect of Paul's beliefs the just must live by, *it is Paul's belief in Jesus as Messiah and Son of God -- HIS FAITH -- and not his licentious lifestyle of haughtiness and pride evidently arising from his doctrine about the EFFECT of his faith.*

Hence, Paul's *faith* as documented by Luke is the same as the apostles' faith / beliefs about Jesus. John concludes his gospel by stating his aim was that we believe Jesus was Messiah and Son of God. (John 20:30-31.) The righteous thus shall live by *the faith of the proud man whose spirit is not right within him*. Obviously, that faith does not make that proud man whose spirit is *not right* within himself truly justified in God's sight. But the righteous / just must live by the faith Paul had even though Paul admitted for himself it did not allow him to conquer sin in his own life.

D. The Haughty One Whose Faith Is Correct Does Not Stay At Home

Next, this passage says this haughty one does not stay at home. Paul indeed traveled extensively. He had no home life. While such travelling does not make one a sinner, for neither did Jesus nor any of the 12 have a true home life to speak of, we are following the lead of Habakkuk 2:2-5. *We are identifying the multiple traits of this prophesied figure in Habakkuk 2:2-5*. This travelling trait fits Paul too -- and is always regarded as one of his most characteristic traits, e.g., "the missionary journeys of Paul," etc.

E. He Enlarges His Desire As SHL

And the passage continues -- he enlarges his desire as SHL -- as SAUL? or as Sheol? the grave? We discussed the connection above. This is for the reader to prayerfully contemplate. It can be understood either way, and I believe this is intentional. It is a prophetic word-play here in Hebrew, using a word identical to the name of the HAUGHTY MAN, the ONE WHOSE SPIRIT IS NOT RIGHT IN HIMSELF, etc. "He enlarges his desire as SAUL" -- the name he would go by -- is just as important to hear as "He enlarges his desire as SHEOL (the grave)."

F. Gathers All Nations to Himself

Finally, this prophesied figure/man cannot be satisfied just like death cannot be satisfied, and he gathers all "nations" and "peoples" to himself. This matches Paul who claimed his ministry was exclusively to Gentiles (also known as the 'nations' in Hebrew), and he left it to the 12 to evangelize Jews. (Galatians 2.)

G. Be as One Uncircumcised

The implication of verse 16 is that this individual is circumcised now, and his punishment will be to be as one uncircumcised / to become uncircumcised. In the Hebrew, it literally says "be uncircumcised." (Kugler, *Religion in the Dead*

Sea Scrolls (Eerdman's 2000) at page 71 MT text.) It is a single word -- *ha arel* - - "be (as one) uncircumcised," as FF Bruce confirms. (FF Bruce, *A Mind For What Matters* (Eerdmann's 1990) at page 40.)

Thus his body will be rendered unfit to come into God's presence. The Dead Sea Scrolls Bible renders it as "be as one uncircumcised" and this translation is followed by the ASV and ERV and YLT:

Thou art filled with shame, and not glory: drink thou also, and ***be as one uncircumcised***; the cup of Yahweh's right hand shall come round unto thee, and foul shame shall be upon thy glory. Habakkuk 2:16. / be uncircumcised.

[Many mistranslations abound which render it as "be exposed as uncircumcised," but this is in error. See Kugler and Bruce, *supra*. This is influenced by the presupposition that Habakkuk is talking about the Chaldeans who are referenced in Habakkuk 1, and hence we should presuppose these are already uncircumcised people. See this example from Eerdman's Commentary on the Bible. But this is not what the Hebrew says. Instead, it implies ***this individual is a circumcised individual / Jew***, just as was Paul who in God's final judgment will be treated as "one uncircumcised."]

Clearly the episode in Acts 21 shows Paul was circumcised. This proud man whose spirit is not right in himself has to be a circumcised person for this coming judgment on him to fit.

H. The Rebuff to Him Is God is in His Holy Temple

In the passage, Habakkuk prophesies God's rebuff to this man of pride. This man's spirit is not right in himself but the just shall regardless live by his faith. God rebuffs Paul by saying He, God, "is in His Holy Temple." (Hab. 2:20.) Why is this a rebuff to this man of pride? Because Paul falsely taught that God does not live in temples made of human hands. In Acts 17:24, we read Paul says:

"However, the Most High ***does not live in temples made by men.***"

This is of course false Biblically. God's House was the Temple at Jerusalem, as even our Lord Jesus repeatedly said so. Thus it is interesting to see how this passage ends with God affirming the opposite of what Paul taught -- affirming instead that He, God, indeed does live in a Temple made of human hands. It is intended as a rejoinder to this haughty man - whom we see said the opposite. This verse thus too addresses Paul.

Conclusion

Like Messianic prophecies, sometimes it takes time to let the traits sink in and then one sees a match. The double-meaning of SAUL's Hebrew name, and the dual use of SHL in this passage is intriguing once one looks at all the other similarities in the passage to Paul.

God through Habakkuk tells us Paul had the right FAITH, and we shall live by HIS FAITH, but Paul was a proud man due to his conflict with the words of Jesus. His spirit was not right within himself, as Paul's own words prove and as are demonstrated by the haughty remarks which fill his letters. Thus, outwardly Paul had the right Christian appearance -- the right expressed Faith or Beliefs about Jesus -- but inwardly "his spirit was not right within him." And this was the vision that Habakkuk had in this prophetic passage.

Finally, Paul matches this prophecy because he gathered all the nations to himself. This is still an ongoing process to this day. A vast number are following Paul, assuming wrongly he comes with the Master's teachings to follow. The prophesied punishment of this figure is to be rendered as an uncircumcised man and suffer accordingly.

It does appear therefore that this is another passage that God gives us as a prophecy about Paul -- not a flattering one. God always provides warnings for His people to hear if we but listen.

Isaiah's Related Prophecy about SHL vs. Jesus

In Isaiah 28:18, God speaks of people who have a "covenant with SHL," typically translated as SHEOL or the grave. The people falsely believe this covenant will protect them from "the whip when it passes through." This means these covenant-people believe their covenant with SHL gives them salvation / protection from God's wrath. Then these people whose prophets and leaders are apostate against God's Law are at odds with what God describes as something He ALREADY LAID as a "chief cornerstone" in Zion. (Isaiah 28:16; see below.) "Behold I am the one *who has LAID* as a foundation in Zion....a precious cornerstone." This cornerstone is Christ, as Jesus / Yashua made clear in Luke 20:17.

Thus, the contrast is between SHL and Jesus / Yashua in Isaiah 28. Listen with ears to hear to verses 14-18 -- with SAUL placed besides SHEOL as an alternative translation:

14 Therefore hear the word of the LORD, you scoffers, who rule this people in Jerusalem!

15 Because you have said, "We have made a covenant with death, and with SAUL / Sheol we have an agreement, when the overwhelming whip passes through it will not come to us, for we have made lies our refuge, and in falsehood we have taken shelter";

16 therefore thus says the Lord GOD, "Behold, I am the one who has laid[as a foundation in Zion, a stone, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone, of a sure foundation: 'Whoever believes will not be in haste.'

17 And I will make justice the line, and righteousness the plumb line; and hail will sweep away the refuge of lies, and waters will overwhelm the shelter."

18 Then your covenant with death will be annulled, and your agreement with SAUL / Sheol will not stand; when the overwhelming scourge passes through, you will be beaten down by it.

The message then would be those relying upon a covenant with Paul / Saul, not the one renewed by the chief cornerstone Yashua with Yahweh, have a false hope. God describes it as a covenant with death.

Incidentally: Irony of Paul's Use of Habakkuk 2:4

God directed Paul to Habakkuk 2:4 to read it as a warning about what Paul had become. But Satan blinded Paul to not recognize this is not a statement about a salvation principle -- "the just shall live by his faith" -- with "his" being a supposed reference to the penitent's faith. Rather, the "his" in "his faith" was about *this man of pride who goes on missionary travels to gather the nations* (Gentiles in Hebrew) to himself but *whose spirit is not right within himself*. This is a warning about the deception by this man of pride yet whose faith was correct.

How ironic that Paul quotes Habakkuk 2:4 twice (see Romans 1:17 and Galatians 3:11) *without realizing it was a prophecy about himself*. Paul was a blind guide as to this passage's meaning. Paul here mistook Habakkuk 2:4 as a doctrinal principle about salvation of 'justification by faith.' And all of us have likewise misread 2:4 by not reading the context of the verses surrounding it.

In context, 2:4 was part of a warning about a prophesied figure whose faith the just shall live by but this figure would (a) be a proud man; (b) whose spirit was not right within himself; (c) who would try to gather all the nations (*i.e.*,

Gentiles) to himself; (d) on his many travels far from home. Who but SHL (Saul) can this prophecy identify?

Study Notes

Ebionites Made A Similar Connection Earlier

The Christian Ebionites made a similar connection regarding Habakkuk 2:4-5 in the 1st century. Their writings were found among the Dead Sea Scrolls. In 1QpHab, known as the Habakkuk Pesher, the Poor (Ebionites) claim Habakkuk 2:4-5 "refers to the Wicked Priest who was called by the name of truth at the beginning of his office, but he became arrogant and abandoned God." The scrolls go on, saying Habakkuk 2:7-11 "concerns the priest who *rebelled*, the last priests of Jerusalem who *have gathered spoil from the nations*, but in the last days this wealth will be given into the hands of the Kittim (Roman) army. It concerns the Wicked Priest, who *attempted to destroy the Teacher of Righteousness*. God will deliver him into the hands of his enemies for punishment."

Eisenman -- a Dead Sea Scroll scholar -- deduced that the Qumram records in part came from a Christian community. In this scenario, Eisenmann sees James (not Jesus) as the Teacher of Righteousness (which I disagree with) and "'the Wicked Priest' and 'the Man of Lying' as two different adversaries of the...community, the Wicked Priest being the High Priest Ananus ben Ananus, James' executioner, and the Man of Lying, St. Paul." ("Robert Eisenmann," *Wikipedia*.)

One can see the Ebionite community linked the Wicked Priest and the Spouter of Lies together as fulfilling Habakkuk 2's prophecy of a "proud" person who gathers the "spoil from the nations" and were enemies of the "Teacher of Righteousness." Again, I believe Eisenmann mistakes James as this teacher when it was truly Jesus. Eisenmann does correctly, I believe, interpret the Ebionites as identifying Paul as the Spouter of Lies in this Habakkuk Pesher for reasons explained in my book *Jesus Words Only*. Hence, in effect, the Ebionites saw both the Wicked Priest and the Spouter of Lies (whether Paul or not) as fulfilling Habakkuk 2:5 as the man whose spirit is not right but gathers all the Gentiles / Nations to himself.

The Dead Sea Scrolls therefore show that others have previously tested Habakkuk 2:5 as a prophecy about a dangerous end-times figure, and not as a spiritual principle about salvation by faith.

And if Eisenmann is correct the Ebionites were the Poor at Jerusalem under James, suggested by Paul's reference to collecting for the Poor (EBION in Hebrew) at Jerusalem under James' authority, then our reading of Habakkuk 2 goes back a long ways in the history of the Christian Church -- it was first advanced by the Ebionites in the 1st Century.

Other Explanations of Habakkuk 2

Some claim because Habakkuk chapter 1 specifically prophesizes about the Chaldeans (Babylonians) that this is whom Habakkuk 2 is talking about. (*Tyndale Concise Bible Commentary* at page 362.) It says the "proud" of 2:4 was already "alluded to" in Habakkuk 1:10-11 which speaks of the Chaldeans. It also changes "his faith" into "their faith," and claims the faith is of the "godly of Judah."

But there are several incongruities to this explanation. Habakkuk 2 starts by a new vision, and this time it is an individual, not a nation, identified as full of pride.

First, let's look at Habakkuk 1:10-11 in the KJV. After verse 6 introduces the Chaldeans, we read in 1:10-11:

10And **they** shall scoff at the kings, and the princes shall be a scorn unto them: **they** shall deride every strong hold; for **they** shall heap dust, and take it. 11Then shall **his** mind change, and he shall pass over, and offend, imputing **his** power unto his god.

The alleged allusion is to the pride of those who scoff at kings. This is in the plural in 1:10, but a singular figure in Habakkuk 2. Verse 11 begins to change to "his" but still does not speak of any single individual who is prideful so it could be linked to the later vision in Habakkuk 2. Also, the "faith" of this prideful individual in chapter two is the faith by which the just shall live, even though the "heart is not right within" this prideful man in Habakkuk 2. So this cannot be the same person as in 1:11 who has a **wrong faith** in another god which faith the just could never live by. Hence, Habakkuk 2:4 is not a reference to the Chaldeans as a singular 'he' or 'his.'



Ammonite watch-tower – Ammon and Moab were warned of a fate like that of Sodom and Gomorrah. Sodom was situated near the Dead Sea

Commentary on the Book Zephaniah

Introduction

Zephaniah is the last of the prophets before the captivity, according to the arrangement of the Hebrew Bible. Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi are post-exilic. His name means “Jehovah hides.” His genealogy is traced back for four generations. Zephaniah was the son of Cushi, the son of Gedaliah, the son of Amariah, the son of Hizkiah. We have therefore more information concerning him than of most of the other minor prophets. There must be a reason why these four generations are given. We believe the reason is to show that he was of royal descent, the great-grandson of the pious king of Judah, Hezekiah. Hizkiah is the same as Hezekiah in the Hebrew. Jewish tradition as well as the reliable rabbinical sources confirm this. The objection that the royal title is not given in connection with Hizkiah is insignificant; at any rate “king of Judah” is mentioned in connection with Josiah in the first verse of this book of Zephaniah,

so that it may have been left out in connection with Hizkiah on purpose. As to his personal history we have no further information. It seems as if the Lord has hidden for a good reason these details of His chosen instruments.

The Date of Zephaniah

The date is given in the first verse. He prophesied in the days of Josiah the king of Judah. We are therefore not left in doubt about the time in which he exercised his office as prophet; he was the contemporary of Jeremiah and Micah. As to the exact time during the reign of Josiah in which Zephaniah prophesied, we can be quite sure that it was during the time of the reformation instituted by the king, that is between the twelfth and eighteenth year; yet the reformation was still in process and not yet fully completed. The temple must have been purified from the idol abominations, for Zephaniah presupposes the maintenance of the temple worship.

The Message of Zephaniah

To understand the message we must consider the character of the times in which the prophet lived, and the conditions in Judah. We have done so already in connection with the annotations on Jeremiah, but add here another description. As already stated a great reformation was in progress, which, like all reformation, ended in deformation, producing a reaction which plunged the house of Judah into the final apostasy. It seems the reformation was mostly an outward one; in their hearts the people still had a longing for the idols and the abominations connected with them (Zephaniah 1:4). We shall point out in the annotations some of the details of the evils prevailing at that time.

Like the other minor prophets, judgment is announced first, followed by exhortations to repentance, with the promises of glory for the remnant of His people when the day of Jehovah is passed and the Lord is King over all the earth. He proclaims the judgment to come for the whole earth, as well as upon Judah and Jerusalem, and then gives a fuller description of the day in which that judgment is to be executed, the still future day of Jehovah. As we have seen, Obadiah and Joel are the earliest prophets, and both announced the day of Jehovah. The last of the prophets before the captivity bears his additional testimony to the same day, describing it as a day of wrath, of trouble and distress. This is the first chapter.

In the second chapter the exhortations begin. He exhorts the nation to repent and to seek the Lord, so that they might be hid in the day of the Lord's anger. Then

he announced that the day is surely coming upon all the nations, and that the isles of the nations will not escape.

In the third chapter the prophet shows how the Lord will deal in judgment also with the ungodly among His people. He announces His purpose concerning the nations with the expectation that the godly remnant among the Jews will fear Him then, and receive instruction and wait for Him.

Then follows the joyous message of the future salvation of the elect people. It will be a poor afflicted remnant which trusts in the Lord, which, born again, will be a holy people separated from evil. This is followed by the singing times. “Sing, daughter of Zion; shout, O Israel; be glad and rejoice with all thy heart, O daughter of Jerusalem. The LORD hath taken away thy judgments, He hath cast out thine enemy; the King of Israel, even the LORD, is in the midst of thee; thou shalt not see evil any more.”

The Division of Zephaniah

Like Nahum’s prophecy, Zephaniah’s is one great prophetic utterance. The division into three chapters, as given in the Authorized Version, is the correct arrangement, with the exception of the first eight verses of chapter 3, which should be added to the second chapter. The subdivisions will be pointed out in the analysis and annotations.

Chapter 1

1. Judah’s doom and the Day of the Lord

The Day of the Lord, the Day of Judgment

- 1. The judgment of all the world (Zephaniah 1:1-3)*
- 2. The judgment will destroy the evildoers in Judah (Zephaniah 1:4-13)*
- 3. The day of the Lord (Zephaniah 1:14-18)*

Verses 1-3. Judgment of the whole earth.

Zephaniah 1:1-3. The first verse is the superscription, and tells us, as pointed out in the introduction, of the connection of Zephaniah and the date of his prophecy.

Then comes the announcement of the judgment. It is to consume all things from off the face of the land, man and beast, the fowls of heaven, the fishes of the sea, and end the stumbling blocks of the wicked, that is, their idols and idol worship. The land is not to be understood as being Israel's land exclusively; it means the earth. That the judgment vision of Zephaniah has a wider scope than the land and the people is fully confirmed by other passages. The great day comes upon men everywhere (Zephaniah 1:17); it is universal (Zephaniah 2:4-15); all the isles of the nations are mentioned (Zephaniah 2:11).

Verses 4-13. Judgment of Judah and Jerusalem

Zephaniah 1:4-13. It will fall especially upon the house of Judah and Jerusalem. In the verses which follow we have a description of the moral conditions of the Jews when Josiah started his reformation, which prophetically gives us a picture of the conditions among the Jews when this age closes, and a portion of them is back in the land of their fathers, as they are attempting to get it back now through political Zionism.

The hand of the Lord will be stretched out upon Judah and Jerusalem. The remnant of Baal will be cut off and the Chemarim, with the priests. Idolatry, whatever remains of it, should then be completely abolished. "Baal" was the idol of god of the Phoenicians and Canaanites; the word means "lord" or "possessor." With the worship of this god licentious practices were connected. Chemarim is the name of the idolatrous priests which conducted the high places, appointed for this service by the kings of Judah 2 Kings 23:5. In Zephaniah 1:5 and Zephaniah 1:6 other forms of idolatry are mentioned. They worshipped the hosts of the heavens from housetops. They worshipped the stars, and studied their movements as if they could give them help and a revelation. Astrology, so widely practiced among civilized nations today, is an old cult 2 Kings 21:3; 2 Kings 21:5; Jeremiah 8:22; Jeremiah 19:13. Others used the Holy Name of Jehovah, and at the same time they used the name of Malcham. All was a turning back from Jehovah and dishonoring His Name.

As to the future curse of idolatry among the Jews, the passage in Matthew 12:43; Matthew 12:45, the words of our Lord, gives us the full information. The unclean spirit there is the spirit of idolatry, from which the Jews in their dispersion are free; the unclean spirit has left the house, but it is to return, and the last state is worse than the first: "Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation." They will worship the man of sin, the masterpiece of Satan, who in the end of the age will take his place in the temple of God 2 Thessalonians 2:1-17.

The day of the Lord is at hand; a statement which verifies our interpretation that this prophecy refers to the future day. The Lord has prepared His sacrifice and bidden his guests. It is the supper of the great God, to which He invites His guests. Read in connection with this Revelation 19:17-18. What that day will bring is described in Zephaniah 1:8-13. All the evil doers will be dealt with by the Lord.

Verses 14-18. The Day of the Lord

Zephaniah 1:14-18. The great day of the Lord is now more fully described. It is the day when the announced judgment will take place. Higher criticism sees nothing but some invasion of the land by hostile forces. But it is the same great day, the culmination of the past ages, when Jehovah is revealed, so vividly described in Joel 2:11. On that day the voice of the Lord will be heard Psalms 29:1-11; Isaiah 66:6. When that day comes the mighty man will cry out in bitterness, for he is unable to save himself from the judgment tempest. In two verses the prophet describes vividly the greatness of that day.

A day of wrath is that day, A day of trouble and distress, A day of ruin and desolation, A day of darkness and gloom, A day of clouds and cloudy darkness; A day of the trumpet and the war cry Against the fortified cities, And against the lofty battlements.

Thomas of Celano used in 1250 the Vulgate translation of the first sentence “Dies irae, dies illa” in writing his famous judgment hymn. It is well to compare Scripture with Scripture about that day. (For instance Zephaniah 1:15 with Joel 3:1-21; Amos 5:18; Amos 5:20; Amos 8:9; Isaiah 13:10, and many other passages.) When that day comes the wicked will perish; distress will be upon all. They will walk like blind men, that is, trying to find a way to escape, but not able to find one. Nothing will be able to deliver from the fury of that day, neither silver nor gold will avail anything.

Chapter 2:1-3:8

The judgment of the nations

The Call to Repentance in View of the Judgment

- 1. The call to repentance (Zephaniah 2:1-3)*
- 2. The judgment of the Philistines (Zephaniah 2:4-7)*
- 3. The judgment of Moab and Ammon (Zephaniah 2:8-10)*

4. *The judgment of the other nations* (Zephaniah 2:11-15)

5. *The woe and warning to Jerusalem and His people* (Zephaniah 3:1-8)

2:1-3. The call to repentance

Zephaniah 2:1-3. As we found it in Joel, so it is here. In view of the coming of the day, the call goes forth to the nation to humble themselves and to repent. On the near horizon in Joel the Assyrian invasion was threatening. In Zephaniah it is the Babylonian power. But all points to the future day of the Lord. They are to gather themselves together. The word used for “gather” has the meaning of gathering stubble or wood for burning. In their unbelief they were worthless as stubble and dry wood, fit for the burning. The phrase “not desired” has been translated “which does not turn pale.” But this cannot be sustained. The better meaning is “unashamed.”

The second verse gives the reason why they should humble themselves and be ashamed of all their evil doings. Because the decree of judgment has gone forth, the fierce anger of the Lord in His day is about to pass as the chaff. This is followed by the appeal to seek the Lord. This is addressed to the meek in the land, the godly remnant which fears the Lord, both in Zephaniah’s day and in the end of the age, when “that day” comes. They are meek and seek to keep the statutes and judgments of the Lord in a righteous life. Still they are exhorted to seek meekness. For it is this, meekness and lowliness, that pleases the Lord. The promise is held out that they would be hid in the day of the Lord’s anger. Zephaniah means “hidden by the LORD” or “whom the LORD hides; ” His name comes into play as a comfort that the godly will be hid in the day of the Lord. In Isaiah we have a more direct word about this. “Come, My people, enter thou in thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee; hide thyself as it were for a moment, until the indignation be overpast” Isaiah 26:20. This has often been used as a proof text that the true Church is not to pass through the great tribulation period. But it has nothing whatever to do with the Church, but is the promise given to the godly remnant Revelation 12:1-17, the preservation of the seed of the woman). It is the teaching of the New Testament that the true Church will be taken to her heavenly abode by the coming of the Lord for His saints 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; 2 Thessalonians 2:1-17).

Verses 4-7. Judgment upon the Philistines

Zephaniah 2:4-7. Judgment is to come in that day upon Gaza and Ashkelon, upon Ashdod and Ekron, the chief cities of Philistia. The inhabitants of the seacoast, the nation of the Cherethites, and all the land of the Philistines, will

undergo judgment. The seventh verse (Zephaniah 2:7) gives the connection with the opening message of the chapter, the call to repentance. "And the coast shall be for the remnant of the house of Judah; they shall feed thereupon; in the house of Ashkelon shall they lie down in the evening; for the LORD their God shall visit them, and turn away their captivity." Because the remnant is to possess this territory when Philistia is judged they ought to repent and seek the Lord. That this is still unaccomplished hardly needs to be pointed out. It was not fulfilled in the remnant which returned from the Babylonian captivity. Since the day of their rejection, when they rejected Christ, they have been out of the land. Here is a prophecy of ultimate blessing to the remnant in the day of the Lord, when they will be regathered.

Verses 8-10. Judgment upon Moab and Ammon

Zephaniah 2:8-10. Moab and Ammon had sinned against Israel, they reviled them and magnified themselves against their border. Their judgment is announced, as it is in the former prophets, like Joel, Amos, and Ezekiel. Moab will be overthrown like Sodom, and Ammon will become like Gomorrah. Then when the judgment of Moab and Ammon finally takes place, as it will in His day, the remnant of His people shall spoil them, and the remnant shall possess them. It is obvious this also remains to be fulfilled.

This judgment of Moab and Ammon is the harvest which their pride and self-exaltation has brought to them (Zephaniah 2:10).

Verses 11-15. Judgment upon other nations

Zephaniah 2:11-15. The Lord, in that day, will be terrible unto all these nations. The idol gods will all be abolished. In their place He alone will be worshipped (Zechariah 14:1-21). All the isles of the nations will turn in worship to Him. The Ethiopians, the African nations, will fall under the judgment. He will stretch out His hand against Assyria, the power of the north, including both the Assyrian which then was and the Assyrian of the end-time, still to come. It is evident from Zephaniah 2:13 that when Zephaniah penned these words Nineveh had not yet fallen. Her utter desolation is predicted by Zephaniah as it was predicted by Nahum. The fate of Nineveh announced was literally accomplished. And some day all the proud cities of the nations, steeped in iniquity, will also fall as Nineveh was dethroned from her place of mistress of the world.

3:1-8. Judgment upon Jerusalem

Zephaniah 3:1-8. The filthy, polluted and oppressing city is Jerusalem. Four charges are laid against her.

1. She obeyed not the voice. 2. She received not correction. 3. She trusted not in the Lord. 4. She drew not near to her God.

And because she was untrue to her God and Lord, oppressive cruelty and evil persisted. It was the outcome of her wrong attitude toward the Lord. Her leaders, the princes, were like roaring lions, devouring the prey. Her judges in oppressing the poor were like ravening wolves, ferocious and destructive. How all this fits Christendom today. There is disobedience to the Lord, no faith in Him, no humiliation and no repentance. Hence the moral conditions of today.

Their prophets and priests were also corrupt, as we have learned before in the former prophets. Yet the holy and just Jehovah was in the midst of them. Yet the unjust was not ashamed, but continued in evil-doing.

Then Jehovah addresses the nation: "I have cut off nations; their towers are desolate; I have made their streets waste, that none passeth by; their cities are destroyed, so that there is no man, that there is none inhabitant. I said, Surely thou wilt fear me, thou wilt receive instruction; so their dwelling should not be cut off; howsoever I punished them, they rose early, and corrupted all their doings." But they did not heed His plea. They did not take warning from what happened to other nations.

Chapter 3:8-20

Israel in kingdom blessing

Judgment and Glory

1. The waiting for the end (Zephaniah 3:8)

2. The glory that follows (Zephaniah 3:9-20)

Zephaniah 3:8. "Therefore wait for me, saith Jehovah, for the day when I arise for the prey; for my determination is to gather the nations, to assemble the kingdoms, to pour upon them mine indignation, all my fierce anger; for all the earth shall be devoured with the fire of my jealousy." This verse leads us back to the opening exhortation of this chapter. They are as a nation to wait for Him, till the day comes in which He arises to execute the judgment of the nations. It has been a long waiting. Centuries have come and gone; His earthly people have been the wanderers among the nations of the world, where they have been a byword and a curse, yet witnesses for Him also. Still they are waiting for "that day," the day which closes the times of the Gentiles, when the stone strikes the great man image and becomes a mountain filling the whole earth Daniel 2:1-49.

Verses 9-13. Salvation and deliverance in the kingdom

Verses 14-20. Praise in the kingdom

Zephaniah 3:9-20. The opening verse of this glory section has been variously interpreted. It has been used by the “Pentecostal-delusion” as being a prophecy concerning their imagined gift of tongues restoration. In the first place it must be noticed that in the Hebrew the word people is in the plural. We read therefore this verse as follows: “For then will I turn to the nations a pure lip, that they may all call upon the name of Jehovah, to serve Him with one shoulder.” Luther paraphrased this verse in the following way: “Then will I cause that nations to be preached to otherwise, with friendly lips, that they may call upon the name of the Lord.” But this interpretation is not sustained by the text. It means that the nations which escaped the judgment-wrath of the day of the Lord will be converted, and as a result of their conversion they will call upon the Lord with pure lips; all idolatry will cease and all serve the Lord as one man.

While the peoples in Zephaniah 3:9 are the Gentiles, the suppliants in Zephaniah 3:10 are Jews brought back from the dispersion. They are brought back by the converted Gentiles as an offering unto the Lord Isaiah 66:20. When that takes place the restored nation will not have need to be ashamed for all their doings, for the Lord in infinite grace will have cleansed them from their iniquity, and now they are no longer proud and haughty, but a remnant humbled, trusting in the Lord. The great chapter in Ezekiel tells us of the conversion of this remnant Ezekiel 36:1-38. They will then be a righteous nation, do no iniquity, nor speak lies. The speaking of lies, the use of deceit, is one of the traits of the Jews today, and has often been responsible for their sufferings among the Gentiles. But when that day comes the deceitful tongue will not be found in their mouth. They will feed and lie down and none shall make them afraid. They have become once more “the sheep of His pastures, gathered by the Good Shepherd. The time of singing and rejoicing has come.

Sing, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O Israel! Be glad and rejoice With all thy heart, O Daughter of Jerusalem.

Jehovah has removed thy judgments; He has cast out thine enemy; The King of Israel, Jehovah, Is in the midst of thee, Thou wilt see evil no more.

In that day it shall be said to Jerusalem, Fear not, Zion, let not thy hands be feeble.

Jehovah, thy God is in the midst of thee, A mighty One who saves; He rejoices over thee with gladness; He rests in His love; He rejoices over thee with singing.

What a glorious day that will be! It will be glory for Him and glory for His people. The great prophetic song recorded by Isaiah (chapter 12) will then be heard in the midst of His redeemed people. The great Psalms of praise and worship will fill Jerusalem. Judgments are forever gone; no enemy will threaten them again. He Himself is in their midst, none other but He whom their fathers delivered once into the hands of the Gentiles, over whom they cried, “His blood be upon us and our children.” He is King. The throne of His father David is now filled. The Mighty One saves, and rejoices over His redeemed people. He has the travail of His soul to the full and is satisfied.

Then He will make them a name and a praise among all the peoples of the earth. Thus ends the great message of Zephaniah, the great-great-grandson of the pious King Hezekiah.

The Prophecy of Zephaniah

The prophecy in Zephaniah is like that of Obadiah and Joel; it focuses on the events that will happen on the Day of the Lord. Fortunately, Zephaniah tells his ancestry. He is a descendant of Hezekiah through Amariah, Gedaliah, and Cushi. Was Hezekiah the Southern king who reigned from 726 BC to 697 BC? Although he could have been, the Bible does not give enough information to confirm him as Zephaniah’s great-great-grandfather. We know that Hezekiah had sons. Manasseh took his place at age 12 and reigned for 55 years as an evil king. The rest of his sons were sent to Assyria and made into eunuchs. Was Amariah the son of Hezekiah? Was he sent to Assyria and made into a eunuch after he had sons of his own? The Bible simply does not give enough information to confirm that Zephaniah is a descendant of King Hezekiah.

People in the Church denominations too often look down on people outside the Church. Commonly, the pious posture is that secular culture is full of idolatry, is way too relativistic in its approach to morals, and has no time for contemplation on God. Shame on them! Now, this may be an overstatement, even an unfair statement. But our culture feels our “judgment”. In their book *Un-Christian*, (Baker Books, 2007) David Kinnaman and Gabe Lyons of the Barna research group discovered that the secular popular opinion of those in the church is that we are, among other things, hypocritical, in many, many ways and unloving, sheltered, too political and judgmental. This is eye opening to me. True, we know that the Gospel either causes people to turn away from God or turn to God (as we saw when we discussed Isaiah 6:9-13). But if someone is going to stumble, I want it to be over the Gospel and not over me. Sometimes it is a very healthy endeavour for judgment to begin with the household of God. Zephaniah performs that role.

In 1:1, Zephaniah traces his heritage to the family of King Hezekiah, which puts his ministry at the end of the reign of Manasseh, the most wicked of all the kings of Judah and at the beginning of Josiah, one of the most godly of the kings of Judah. You will remember from our study of Kings, that Josiah led Judah in an effort of great reform. Perhaps it was Zephaniah's preaching that provided the support Josiah needed for his initiatives. Zephaniah prophesies God's judgment against the secular nations surrounding Judah, but that only sets him up to thunder judgment on Judah itself. Twice he moves from the general to the specific, with the specific being Judah. In 1:1-3 there is universal judgment, followed immediately with judgment on Judah (1:4-2:3). Then in 2:4-15, there is judgment on the nations surrounding Judah, followed by judgment on Jerusalem (3:1-7). This technique sets God's people up for a scathing rebuke. True, God will hold the nations accountable for their sins, but how much more will he hold God's people accountable for theirs!!

There are three sins that are specifically addressed by Zephaniah. He speaks of "...those who bow down on the roofs to worship the starry host, those who bow down and swear by the LORD and who also swear by Molek, those who turn back from following the LORD and neither seek the LORD nor inquire of him." (Zep 1:5-6 NIV)

Bowing down before the hosts of heaven points to false worship and idolatry. Swearing to the Lord *and* to the god Molek is what we call syncretism, mixing worship of the LORD with worship of other gods. And not seeking the Lord is the sin of indifference. These three sins are rampant among God's people today. Zephaniah is right to warn us that God will be even more severe with us, who should know better.

But one more time, Zephaniah moves from the general to the specific. In 3:8-10 he is discussing how the nations will one day be forgiven and be brought to faith. This is followed by an equally glorious prospect that God's people will one day be restored to fellowship with God and used of him as a source of blessing to the nations (3:11-20).

Zephaniah uses the term *the Day of the Lord* more than any other prophet. Again, this term has two sides to it. One is the day of the visitation of the wrath of God, both on the nations and on God's people, who will experience the destruction of Jerusalem and exile to Babylon because "she has not obeyed his voice; she has not received correction; she has not trusted the LORD; she has not drawn near to her God" (3:2). But this day is also one of immense future blessing. The remnant of Israel will be re-gathered, redeemed and restored. God

will make them “renowned and praised among all the peoples of the earth.” (3:20)

So, let the judgment begin and let it begin with the church!!

Dear friends, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal that has come on you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice inasmuch as you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed. If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. If you suffer, it should not be as a murderer or thief or any other kind of criminal, or even as a meddler. However, if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name. For it is time for judgment to begin with God’s household; (1Peter 4:17 NIV)

1. Read Zephaniah 3:9-17. How does this encourage you even during a time when God might be cleansing his people from their sins?
2. Where do you see our culture accepting worship of many gods, including the worship of the one true God? Do you see this in the church as well?
3. Read John 14:6. How does this passage resonate with the message of Zephaniah? With the other prophets we have surveyed?

Zephaniah Devotional

Zephaniah 1:18

Neither their silver nor their gold shall be able to deliver them in the day of the LORD's wrath; but the whole land shall be devoured by the fire of his jealousy: for he shall make even a speedy riddance of all them that dwell in the land.

Zephaniah is a contemporary of the prophet Jeremiah, thus he would have exercised his ministry during the reign of Josiah, which would have been prior to the 70 years of Babylonian captivity.

During Josiah's reign, there had been somewhat of a revival among the Jewish people. A closer study of the time of this revival, which was a superficial revival, made it inevitable that the pending judgment of the Babylonian captivity would take place.

This is the situation in Zephaniah's day of ministry as God brings this Jewish prophet to His people to warn them. As we join Zephaniah, we see he is

revealing to the Jews the approaching "Day of the Lord." This phrase, "the Day of the Lord," is a key phrase, and used often, in Bible prophecy.

The phrase, the "day of the Lord", was first introduced by the ancient prophet Joel and is a phrase used by many of the prophets. The definition of the phrase is, "any time in history when God intercedes in the affairs of man personally on the earth." That definition certainly describes the approaching judgment for the Jews in Zephaniah's day.

Zephaniah, in this reading for today, will use the term seven times. Indeed, the Lord will intercede in the affairs of the Jewish people and even though there was a revival, God's chastisement did come and it did happen in the "near future", as it relates to Zephaniah's day.

When God uses a prophet to tell the people the future, those prophecies will either have a short-term fulfilment or a long-term fulfilment. Sometimes the prophecy will have both a short-term and/or a long-term future fulfilment. Zephaniah's prophecies in our reading today are to warn the people of the coming of the Babylonian captivity, which was close at hand.

But as mentioned, there is also a long-term fulfilment in view here as well. The long-term fulfilment is to come about, I believe, in the not too distant future. Let me remind you that the Babylonians of Zephaniah's day are the Iraqis today.

Prophecy even tells us that the literal city of "Babylon" will be center stage as the final-days drama unfolds not too far down the prophetic pathway, Revelation 18.

As we look at current events in the Middle East, with a focus on Iraq, we see that the stage is being set, all the actors are moving onto the stage, and the curtain is about to go up on the last act in the drama for the "end times".

That being the case, we also are about to leave this earth and go up into the heavenlies, as soon as Jesus shouts to call us to join Him in His Father's house. That shout could come today.

Zephaniah 2:3

Seek ye the LORD, all ye meek of the earth, which have wrought his judgment; seek righteousness, seek meekness: it may be ye shall be hid in the day of the LORD's anger.

As is the case in much of Bible prophecy in each prophecy there may well be a "short term" fulfilment and/or a "long term" fulfilment. Thus, the prophecy we are looking at may be fulfilled in the near future, sometime soon after the prophecy was given.

It may also have a long term fulfilment, in other words it will be fulfilled in the future, certainly in the future from Zephaniah's day, as well as future as it relates to our day.

Our devotional reading, the extended reading, has both a short-term fulfillment and a yet to be fulfilled aspect to the prophecy. Zephaniah was telling his people that there was judgment coming to Judah in his day, in the times of King Josiah.

Zephaniah was a contemporary of the prophet Jeremiah who also called for judgment upon Judah. The time period was around 630 - 625 BC before the capture and destruction of Judah in 586 BC. The Babylonians would come as God's agents in the punishment of Judea, at the time when they would be carried out of the land of Israel into Babylon for 70 years.

The often used phrase in this book, "the day of the Lord" , is evidence that the prophecy also pertains to the last days, the days when Messiah Jesus Christ comes to judge and then to rule and reign in Jerusalem.

Zephaniah is a prophet to Judah and the Jewish people, but also a prophet with a prophecy for our present day. Notice verse 1 as it relates to the gathering together of a people, the Jewish people, into a nation that is not desired by the world. This is certainly the case in our world today. The Jewish nation of Israel is a nation not wanted by many nations in the Middle East.

The phrase the "day of the Lord" is referring to the times leading up to the return of the Messiah, Jesus, which includes the seven-year Tribulation Period preceding the Second Coming.

It is very interesting to note the geographical areas referred to by Zephaniah found in verses 4-15. This is a prophecy focused by Zephaniah on the neighbors of the Jews in Israel. Look at verse 4 where it names the location of Gaza, a "hot-spot" today in the Middle East.

Gaza, Ashkelon and Ashdod, towns in Biblical times located in the lands of the Philistines, will come under judgment. By the way the Philistines are not the Palestinian people of today. The present-day Palestinians are descendants of Esau and the Edomites.

However, this geographical location and its inhabitants today are the ones who will face judgment. Obadiah 15-18 and Ezekiel 35 tell of the coming judgment on the people of Gaza today, the Palestinians.

These passages of prophecy indicate that the Palestinians will be as if they never were a people. This prophecy, the prophecies of Obadiah and Ezekiel, and the present-day situation in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, focused on the Gaza and the Gaza Strip, reveal to us that the stage is being set for the final drama to begin. Bible prophecy will be fulfilled.

Zephaniah 3:9

For then will I turn to the people a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the LORD, to serve him with one consent.

As we read our selection of God's prophetic word in Zephaniah, we must realize that the Lord is one day, a day that seems not too far into the future, will one day pour out his indignation upon the nations of the world that have brought harm to the Jewish people, verse 8.

God through the prophet Zephaniah tells the Jews not to be proud. In fact, he tells them they will be no “more haughty” because of his “holy mountain”. The “holy mountain of God” is the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. This is to be the location of the Lord's presence among his people forever, Psalm 132:13-14.

It is in the midst of the warnings and promises that the Lord tells his people that he will return to them a “pure language”, verse 9. This passage needs some explanation. The language of the Jewish people for the first 2,000 years of their existence was the Hebrew language.

With the destruction of the Temple, the devastation of the city of Jerusalem, and the dispersion of the Jews into the four corners of the earth in 70A.D, the Jews basically left off from speaking the Hebrew language.

Any linguist will confirm that Hebrew was a dead language for almost 2000 years. It was not used for daily conversation, for commerce, or for anything else except a rare reading of the Hebrew text in a place of Jewish worship.

In the late 1800's, a Jewish man named Eliezar Ben-Yahuda moved to Israel with his new bride and they started to learn Hebrew, develop new Hebrew words, develop a method of teaching Hebrew, and even put together a Hebrew dictionary with the new words in it.

The miracle of the restoration of the Hebrew language to the Jewish people of today is evidence that we are living in the days referred to by Zephaniah. Not only was the prophecy of the resurrection of the Hebrew language fulfilled, but all the other prophecies Zephaniah wrote down for us today will be fulfilled as well - and most likely in the near future.

Let's keep looking up - Jesus is coming!

Zephaniah 3:20

At that time will I bring you again, even in the time that I gather you: for I will make you a name and a praise among all people of the earth, when I turn back your captivity before your eyes, saith the LORD.

These verses, written by the ancient Jewish prophet Zephaniah for our reading today are a prophecy of a day yet future for the Jewish people. The prophecy will be fulfilled in the coming "kingdom period" promised to the Jewish people.

There was an interesting phrase used in verse 14, the word "daughters" before Zion and Jerusalem. The prophet used "daughter" because in Hebrew, the name of a city is in the feminine gender and "daughter" is referring to the residents of the city. The people of Jerusalem, Zion, which are synonymous, mean the same city and the daughters are the residents of that city.

These residents will rejoice in Jerusalem because God has given the Kingdom to Jesus, the Messiah King and has taken away the judgment of almost 2,000 years from the Jews, verse 15. The "King," King Jesus, the one who comes from the family of King David, will be in the midst of the Jews on His throne in the eternal undivided city of Jerusalem.

The Jewish people, because of disobedience, have been scattered around the world for almost 2,000 years. In this coming "kingdom period", the Lord will not only gather them "back home" but the nations from which these Jews have been gathered will praise the Jews as compared to today when they are dishonoured, oppressed, and often persecuted.

This will be a new age for the Jewish people. Ironically, the world should be honouring the Jews today - they are the 'chosen people' of God. God is not finished with the Jewish people.

Today, the world finds it difficult to honor the Jews and instead easy to mock them. This type of treatment focused on the Jews will continue until the Messiah

Jesus comes. But the world must remember that the Lord has another plan for His "chosen people."



Relief of Darius giving an audience

Commentary on the Book of Haggai

Introduction

Between Zephaniah and Haggai is the period of the captivity of the house of Judah in Babylon. Haggai is the first of the three post-Exilic prophets, though not the most prominent one, which is Zechariah.

Haggai means "my feast," or perhaps "the Festal one." Nothing is known of his personal history. He is mentioned in Ezra, Ezra 5:1 and Ezra 6:14. The first verse of the book which bears his name gives us the date of his prophecy. It was in the second year of Darius the king. The king is Darius Hystaspes, and the year is 520 B.C. Two months later young Zechariah began to lift up his voice likewise. It seems that Haggai's prophetic office extended over four months only. Some have concluded from Haggai 2:3 that he must have known the first temple. If he saw that temple he must have been at least 80 years old, if not older, when he prophesied. But the passage upon which this supposition rests does not necessarily imply this. He was probably born in the captivity, and a young man like his greater associate Zechariah.

The Times of Haggai and Zechariah

In order to understand the prophecies of Haggai as well as Zechariah, the history contained in the book of Ezra must be carefully studied. The reader will consult the introduction to the book of Ezra and the annotations on the different chapters.

We mention here but a few of the leading historical facts of this period. After the remnant had returned from Babylon the feasts commanded by the law were first of all reinstituted. Then in the second year, 535 B.C., the foundations of the new temple were laid. It was a time of rejoicing and a time of sorrow. What was this second temple in comparison with the first house? (See Ezra 3:12-13.) There were tears of joy and tears of sorrow. Then the building of the temple was neglected for a time. There were three causes. The indifference, the faintheartedness of the people, and the oppositions from the enemy. The Samaritans, a mongrel race Ezra 4:11; Ezra 4:9-24 offered, after the foundation of the temple had been laid, to form an alliance with the Jewish remnant, and to assist them with it. When the proposal was nobly rejected they employed political means to dwarf the rebuilding of the house of the Lord, by misrepresentations at the Persian court. Their schemes, after some time, seemed to be quite successful, when in reply to their petition to Artaxerxes, 522 B.C., they were told that the building of the temple must be stopped. Artaxerxes was a pretender, known in history as Pseudo-Smerdis. During the remainder of his reign the building was completely stopped; but it lasted about a year only. His successor, Darius Hystaspes (521. B.C.) was more favorable to his Jewish subjects. It was then that Haggai and Zechariah urged the continuation of the building of the temple in their prophetic messages. But the slow progress in the building of the temple was altogether chargeable to the intrigues of the Samaritans. The remnant was negligent in this matter to a great extent. During the time when the house was unfinished many Jews had used their means in erecting fine dwellings and beautifying them; they acted in a selfish, indifferent manner.

The harvest also had turned out very poor, the blessing of the Lord was lacking in all that they did, therefore the prophet spoke then and told them that all was an expression of the displeasure of the Lord in neglecting His house. "Ye have sown much and bring in little; ye eat but ye have not enough; ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink, ye clothe you, but there is none warm; and he that earneth wages, earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes" (Haggai 1:6) .

These were outward circumstances which led the Spirit of God to call Haggai to the prophetic office.

The Message of Haggai

The purpose of his message has been stated in the preceding paragraph. But the message goes far beyond his time, and like the former prophets, leads up to the time of glory. He speaks of the Messiah, our Lord, as the desire of all nations, and of the times when all nations shall be shaken; when another house is to be filled with the Lord's glory. This passage is quoted in Hebrews 12:26-27, and will be more closely examined in the annotations. Our postmillennial brethren in their expositions have explained all these promises as being realized in the Church. The second temple is, according to their views, a prophecy concerning the Church. In the language of one: "He announces that the time is not far off when the privileges of Jehovah's worship shall be extended over all the earth, and that the treasures of all nations will then be brought to adorn this temple, and exalt its glory above the departed splendor of the former house, while peace and prosperity shall reign among the unnumbered worshippers." But inasmuch as none of the prophets knew anything whatever about the body of Christ, the Church, in which there is neither Jew nor Gentile, this interpretation is incorrect. The Church is the mystery which was not made known in former ages Ephesians 3:1-21. Hence Haggai did not describe the Church under the term of the temple, but his prophecy reaches beyond the church-age to the day of the Lord, when all nations will be shaken, and the Lord will return and bring with Him the promised glory.

The message of Haggai is written in a very simple style, quite different from the style of the pre-exilic prophets. He makes frequent use of interrogatives.

The Division of Haggai

The two chapters contain five addresses. The first address in Haggai 1:1-11 is one of reproof and warning, to arouse the remnant from the apathy into which they had drifted in the building of the temple. The second address in Haggai 1:12-15 was made when the people responded to his appeal, assuring them of the presence of the Lord in their obedience. The third address in Haggai 2:1-9 contrasts the glory of the first house with the greater glory of the second house and introduces the distinctively Messianic glory. The fourth address in Haggai 2:10-19 contains moral instructions and the assurance of blessing. The last address, the conclusion of the message of Haggai, points still more prominently to the day of the Lord, when heaven and earth is to be shaken and the kingdoms of the nations will be overthrown. In the last verse, Zerubbabel, the servant of Jehovah, is a prophetic type of our Lord.

Chapter 1:1-11

1. Call to rebuild the temple

Haggai's First Address

1. *The introduction* (Habakkuk 1:1)
2. *The reproof* (Habakkuk 1:2-6)
3. *Consider your ways* (Habakkuk 1:7-11)

Verses 1-6. Call to face sinful neglect

Haggai 1:1. Darius Hystaspes had been king one year and had entered upon the second year, 520 B.C., when, in the sixth month, in the first day of the month, the word of the Lord was given by Haggai. It was addressed to Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua, the son of Josedech, the high-priest. Zerubbabel and Joshua were the prominent civic and religious leaders of that day. Zerubbabel was the son of Shealtiel (which means asking of God in prayer). Zerubbabel (sown in Babylon) was of royal seed, in direct line of descent from David. In Ezra this princely leader is called by his Persian name Sheshbazzar. In the genealogy of Luke 3:27 he is called a son of Neri, a descendant of David through his son Nathan; he is also called a son of Pedaiah. These divergent statements have been satisfactorily explained by the law of the Levirate marriage Deuteronomy 25:10.

Joshua is mentioned several times in Zechariah. He was the first high-priest after the captivity, and is called in Ezra and Nehemiah Jeshua, the name Joshua transcribed into Greek. He and Zerubbabel are prophetic types of our Lord as the King-Priest. Joshua was the son of Josedech (Jehozadak) the high-priest who was taken by the Babylonians into captivity 1 Chronicles 6:15, and was the grandson of Seraiah, who was put to death by Nebuchadnezzar at Riblah, after the capture of Jerusalem.

Haggai 1:2-6. His message starts with the excuse which the people offered for the apathy in the things of God. "This people say, The time is not come, the time that the LORD'S house should be built." The Lord does not address them as "My people," but in a way which is deprecatory. It was an empty excuse, that His time had not yet come; in reality they were cold towards the cause of the Lord, and sought their own things in place of it. In their indifferent spirit they probably took the relation to Persia, produced by the Samaritan interference, as the ground of their opinion, that it was not the time to come and finish the task.

They were an ungrateful people and should have known better. The Lord, who had announced through Isaiah that Cyrus should be born and say, "Let Jerusalem be built," who raised up Cyrus, whom the prophet had named so many years before he was born; the Lord who had brought them back to the land and prospered them, would certainly give them the victory over all their enemies and make the building of the house possible. They hid behind the unreasonable excuse, it is not the time. How often the same excuse has been used by the professing people of God in our age!

Then the Lord answers them. "is it a time for you yourselves to dwell in your ceiled houses, while this house lieth waste?" They had begun well, as we read in Ezra 3:1-13, when they set the altar upon its bases. But now they had departed from their endeavor; the interest in the one thing had waned, and selfish aims were substituted. They were living in luxurious houses, while His house was completely neglected, it was in a waste condition. The insincerity of their vain excuse was therefore exposed.

Then comes the exhortation to consider their ways (literally: set your heart upon your ways). Had it been profitable for them? No. Ever since they left off building His house bitter disappointment had been their lot. All their self-seeking brought them no gain, but steady loss. The Lord's blessing, given to His earthly people concerning earthly things, had been withholden. They had sown much seed; there was a scanty return. They had not been satisfied in eating or drinking. Their clothing was insufficient. The wages they earned may have been good wages, but it was as if they put them in a bag with holes; the great part of them was lost. While all this must be considered on the ground of the Jew, the principle nevertheless holds good for us as well. "But seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" Matthew 6:33, also refers primarily to the believing Jew, yet it has its application for us. The heart of the believer must always seek Him first. The life of a child of God must always be devoted to Him and the things of God. Our business is to care for His things; His gracious business is to care for us in all things. Neglect of the things of God always brings the same bitter disappointment.

Verses 7-11. Declaration of the Lord's judgment

Haggai 1:7-11. Consider your ways; the Lord spoke again. And now He commands them to go to the mountains and fetch wood and to build the house. He declares that He will take pleasure in it and that He will be glorified. How graciously He craves the whole-heartedness of His people and their full devotion to Himself. It is in worship, indicated by the building of the house, that we

glorify Him. It is worshippers the Father seeketh, worshippers in spirit and in truth John 4:1-54.

On account of their neglect, neglect of Himself and the honor of His Name, as centered in the house, He could not give the blessing He is so willing to bestow upon His people. He withheld the dew and the rain; He prevented the fruitfulness of the fields, and all else was stunted, on account of their attitude toward Him.

“It was Jehovah who blighted their selfish efforts. He was dealing with them on account of their unbelief and neglect. It was not because He loved them not, but because He did. ‘Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth.’ When the Lord allows persons to go away without rebuke, it is the sure sign that all practical bond is broken--if any bond did exist--that He now disowns them, for a time at least. Hence these very chastenings of the Jewish remnant were the proof that His eyes were still over them, and that He felt their negligence of Him and resented--in divine faithfulness--the failure of His people in the care of His glory” (William Kelly) .

Verses 12-15. The people’s response.

Chapter 1:12-15

The Second Address

The spirit of God carried home the burning message of rebuke, and that happened which did not happen with the generation before the captivity. They considered their ways. They took it to heart. They knew the Lord had spoken, and that He was right, the rebuke well earned. Happy are all those who act always in this way, who humble themselves and are obedient to the Lord. It is a refreshing scene which the twelfth verse records. They all united, Zerubbabel, Joshua, and all the remnant of the people. There was not one dissenting voice. They all obeyed the Lord and the words of the prophet.

“Then Haggai, the LORD’S messenger, spoke again in the LORD’S message unto the people.” It is striking how it is made prominent that he did not speak of himself, but was the Lord’s messenger and brought the Lord’s message. Would to God that all those who claim the dignity of a minister of the gospel were all the Lord’s messengers, and spake nothing but the Lord’s message. The greatest curse in Christendom today is the man who claims to be the Lord’s servant, but has no message from the Lord, for the reason that he has lost faith in the Word of God.

Another has pointed out the fact that Haggai is the one prophet who is directly called Jehovah's messenger. He is the least of the post-exilic prophets, yet the Lord puts this honor upon him. In spite of his inferior style, according to the critics, the Lord owns him by this title of distinction.

And what was his message at this time? "I am with you, saith the LORD." That is the content of the second address; just one sentence. But what a sentence it is! What assurance it brings to the heart, and how it inspires faith to action. "I am with you, saith the LORD." Such is our blessed assurance. "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the age." And as we look to Him and trust Him there is power.

The result was a mighty revival in the good work. The Lord stirred them up through His Word, the brief message He sent. Every true revival begins the same way. It has been well said, "I am with you, is the saving principle for faith in the weakest possible day, and let me add, what had they better in the brightest day?"

Chapter 2:1-19. Prophecy of the millennial temple

Chapter 2:1-9

The Third Address- The prediction of the temple

Over a month later, after a good deal of work had been done, the prophet delivered his third message. He is commanded to speak to the same company, headed by Zerubbabel and Joshua; but here the remnant of the people, the exiles who had returned, is also included. If we consult Ezra 3:12 we find that many old men, who had seen the temple of Solomon, burst out in weeping when the small foundation was laid for the new temple. A similar feeling possessed the people when they resumed the temple work after Haggai's first message. In comparison with the former temple, so grand and glorious, the new temple was a feeble and insignificant affair. The prophet begins his message by asking, "Who is left among you that saw this house in its former glory, and how do you see it now? Is it not in your eyes as nothing?" No doubt there was additional weeping when the prophet asked these questions.

Haggai then becomes the prophet of comfort and of hope. "Yet now be strong" is in literal translation, "And now be comforted, O Zerubbabel, saith Jehovah; be comforted all the people of the land, saith Jehovah; for I am with you saith the LORD of Hosts." They were discouraged on account of the smallness of their cause. It is then when the Lord delights to comfort and to cheer his trusting people. He was with His people, though now no longer a mighty host as of old,

but only a small remnant; yet He had not forgotten the Word which He covenanted with them, when He brought them out of Egypt with an outstretched arm. "My Spirit abideth among you; fear ye not." And that should be enough. His Spirit was dwelling with them to execute His work, and be their strength. The gift of the Spirit in New Testament times is something greater than this. After the finished work of our Lord and His glorification, the third Person of the Godhead came in person to indwell every member of the Body of Christ.

Habakkuk 1:6-9 contain the great prophecy concerning the future. It takes us beyond the time of Haggai, past this present age, and puts before our hearts the same great and glorious day when Christ comes again, when there shall be greater glory and peace. The question is, who is the desire of all nations? It merits a closer examination, for the critics have labored to explain away the Messianic meaning of this sentence and rob it of its true meaning. For instance, Canon Driver, in *The New Century Bible* makes the following comment: "The desirable things of all nations shall come, i.e., their costly treasures will be brought to beautify the temple." The Hebrew is a peculiar phrase; the subject is a noun, feminine, singular; the predicate is a plural masculine. The word "chemdath"--desire, is the same as used in Daniel 11:37, the desire of women. If literally translated it would read thus: "And the desire of all nations, they shall come." The Septuagint therefore translates it, "the choice things of all nations shall come;" others have rendered it in the following ways: "The things desired by all nations shall come," with the interpretation that it is the gospel; "all the Gentiles shall come with their delightful things;" "the beauty of all the heathen;" "they shall come to the desire of all nations;" "with the desire of all nations;" the "choicest of all nations (that is the best of them) will come," etc. With all these suggested renderings of the difficult phrase there can be no question that it points to Christ, and must be interpreted as a great Messianic prophecy. The most ancient comments are on this line altogether. Christ is the object of the desire of all nations. This does not necessarily mean that He is subjectively the desire of the nations, but He is objectively, for through Him alone the nations can be blest and receive the righteousness and peace which they need.

First, the announcement is made, "I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land." Have these convulsions been? While there have been shakings of kingdoms in the political sense, and the earth has often been shaken physically and otherwise, this prophecy is yet to be fulfilled. The Holy Spirit bears witness to it in the New Testament, for we read in Hebrews 12:26-28, "Whose voice then (at Sinai in a physical manifestation) shook the earth; but now He hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only but also heaven. And the word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be

shaken may remain. Wherefore, we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved (the coming kingdom and not the church) let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear.” This settles the question as to the futurity of this prophecy. Critics have objected to this interpretation on account of the statement that this universal shaking is to be in “a little while.” They apply it therefore to the nearer political events of that period. But the future in prophecy is often fore-shortened, and besides this, the little while is not man’s little while, but God’s; with Him a thousand years is as a day. Furthermore, in the political events of the times which followed the restoration of the Jews from Babylon not all nations were involved. The prophecy before us declares, “I will shake all nations; ” this, too, is future. The Messiah, spoken of next as “the desire of all nations,” came the first time, but His coming did not bring the blessing and glory to nations as predicted here, nor did the promised peace come. He made peace in His sacrificial death; the foundation for “peace on earth” was then laid, as well as for the great future blessing of all the nations. But the Jews delivered Him into the hands of the Gentiles, and the Gentiles treated Him as did the Jews. In anticipation of His rejection He said, “Think not that I am come to bring peace, but the sword.” Then followed the present age, unknown with its mystery, the church, to the prophets. It will close with the shaking of all nations, when the King-Messiah will appear again and bring the promised blessing to all nations. The silver and gold, which belong to the Lord, will then be brought by the nations. Isaiah 60:5.

It is important to read the ninth verse in the right way, as our Authorized Version is incorrect. It does not say in the Hebrew, “The glory of this latter house shall be greater than the former,” but the Hebrew is, “The latter glory of this house shall be greater than the former, saith the LORD of hosts; and in this place will I give peace, saith the LORD of hosts.” The house of course is the temple. The visible glory dwelt once in the former house; the day is coming when there will be greater glory, the day of His glorious manifestation; then in connection with His coming and that coming restoration, He will give peace.

Verses 10-19. Promise of present blessing

Chapter 2:10-19

The Fourth Address

A few months later Haggai delivered another address of moral instruction and admonition. The question the prophet asks first is answered by the priests negatively. This is followed by a second question, “If one that is unclean by a dead body touch any of these, shall it be unclean?” This they answered

affirmatively; for he that is defiled puts defilement upon everything he handles. When they had given the right answers, the prophet makes the moral application. "So is this people, and so is this nation before me, saith Jehovah; and so is every work of their hands; and that which they offer thereon is unclean." All their works and offerings were unclean, because they were in that condition. They had to be cleansed first. Separation from evil, from that which defiles, was therefore demanded. So it is today. The order is "cease to do evil" and then "learn to do well." We are, as Christians, no less exhorted to purge ourselves, to separate from evil, and then to become fit vessels for the Master's use.

And then the Lord challenges them to prove Him, to see if they separate from evil, are wholly for Him, how faithful He is going to be to them. "From this day," the day of a true return to the Lord followed by obedience and separation, "I will bless you."

Chapter 2:20-23

Destruction of Gentile world power

The Fifth Address

Verses 20-22. The shaking of the nations

Verse 23. The promised ruler

The final address of Jehovah's messenger is altogether prophetic. It is addressed exclusively to Zerubbabel, the governor, a son of David. He tells the princely leader that the heavens and the earth will be shaken; it is the same as in Haggai 2:6. When that comes the throne of the kingdoms will be overthrown; the power of the kingdoms of the nations (the ten kingdoms; Daniel 2:1-49) will be destroyed, for in that day, the falling stone, typifying the second coming of Christ, will make an end of Gentile dominion. The battle of Armageddon will take place and end the military power of these nations. Zerubbabel, the son of David, is the type of Christ, the Son of David. He will then receive the throne of His father David. He will be made a signet. The signet-ring was among those nations a mark of honor. It was given by monarchs to their prime-ministers, conferring all authority upon them. Thus the Lord Jesus Christ is pictured as receiving from God the rule and authority.

Prophecy of Haggai

The prophecy of Haggai is very short yet very important because its primary focus is on the end of the age right before the return of Jesus Christ as King of kings and Lord of lords. The message of Haggai is directly tied to Zechariah's prophecy concerning the events that will occur during this same time period.

Jerusalem and the Holy Land

This study represents our best understanding of the sequence of events that will unfold surrounding Jerusalem and the Holy Land as prophesied by Haggai. The understanding presented here is based on many clear prophecies about the end of the age and the return of Jesus Christ. However, please understand that, by the time you read this, some of these events may have already occurred.

The events shown in Haggai's prophecy are very compressed, and many of these events will happen in an extremely short period of time. It is clear that the focal point of Haggai's prophecy is the contemporary nation of Israel and the city of Jerusalem in particular. His prophecy also foretells events that will impact not only the Holy Land but also all other nations on earth.

The Time Period

In order to clearly establish the time period in which the prophetic portions of Haggai's writings will be fulfilled, it is necessary to review the following four topic areas contained in Haggai's writings:

1. All Nations Will be Shaken
2. The Heavens and Earth Will be Shaken
3. The Past and Present Building of the Temple
4. The Instruction to Build the Temple

1. All Nations Will Be Shaken

"For this says the Lord of hosts; Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land; And I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory, says the Lord of hosts. The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, says the Lord of hosts. The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, says the Lord of hosts: and in this place will I give peace, says the Lord of hosts" (Hag.2:6-9 KJV).

It is clear from the scriptures that there has never been a time in history when God has shaken the heavens, the earth, and all the nations. But, this is what he says he will do just before Jesus returns as King of kings at the end of this age. See also Heb.12:26.

2. The Heavens and Earth Will Be Shaken

"Speak to Zerubbabel, governor of Judah, saying, I will shake the heavens and the earth; And I will overthrow the throne of kingdoms, and I will destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the heathen; and I will overthrow the chariots, and those that ride in them; and the horses and their riders shall come down, every one by the sword of his brother. In that day, says the Lord of hosts, will I take you, O Zerubbabel, my servant, the son of Shealtiel, says the Lord, and will make you as a signet: for I have chosen you, says the Lord of hosts" (Hag. 2:21-23 KJV).

Clearly, this is an end of the age prophecy. Here, we see that God shakes the heavens and the earth, overthrowing the kingdoms (nations) of the world. *"In that day,"* is a reference to the end of the age (Isa.2:17-21; Zeph.1:7-10, 12-16; Joel 3:9-18; Zech.14:1-8,13,20). And as we will see, it is also very clear that God gives the prophetic end-time Zerubbabel great power and authority to represent him and proclaim his good news message to the world.

3. Past and Present Building of the Temple

"And now, I ask you to consider from this day and forward, from the time before a stone was laid upon a stone in the temple of the Lord" (Hag.2:15 Para.).

"Consider now from this day and forward, from the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month, even from the day that the foundation of the Lord's temple was laid, consider it" (Hag.2:18 Para.).

Both of these references about laying the foundation and construction of the temple refer to a past and a future fulfillment.

The Seed

"Is the seed yet in the barn? yes, as yet the vine, and the fig tree, and the pomegranate, and the olive tree, has not brought forth: from this day will I bless you" (Hag.2:19 Para.).

Symbolically, the word seed normally refers to either the Messiah or the elect of God. Because the word barn is used in the context of a harvest, and the elect of God are the first of his harvest of humanity that will be collected prior to Christ's return, it is highly likely that this seed refers to the elect of God who are called to salvation, and the barn represents the Family and Kingdom of God. The various trees that are to bring forth fruit seem to symbolize those servants of God who preach the gospel in the end of the age. See Mic.4:2; Matt.3:10-12; 13:30-42.

4. The Instruction to Build the Temple

Haggai 1:1-2, 7-8 Paraphrased

"In the second year of Darius the king, in the sixth month, in the first day of the month, came the word of the Lord by Haggai the prophet to Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest, saying, This says the Lord of hosts, These people say, The time is not come, the time that the Lord's house should be built [i.e.,The rebuilding of the temple is being delayed]" (vs.1-2).

"This says the Lord of hosts; Consider your ways. Go up to the mountain, and bring wood, and build the house; and I will take pleasure in it, and I will be glorified, says the Lord" (vs.7-8).

This refers to a past and a future fulfillment. For many years, the Jews of today (the Israelis) have made plans to build a temple. They have procured the necessary items for the practice of the sacrificial system, prepared a priesthood for service in the temple, and even become aware of the ceremonial hand gestures that are necessary in order to give offerings and sacrifices. However, they have not gone forward because of political pressure and a persistent controversy that surrounds the location of the future temple (i.e., the City of David, the Temple Mount, or The Mount of Olives).

They have prepared for the building of the temple because they know that God requires a temple as part of his covenant agreement with his chosen people, yet they have procrastinated just as their ancient ancestors did.

Haggai's Prophecies

When examining the first two chapters of Haggai, notice the authority that is behind these prophecies. The expressions *"Then came the word of the Lord"* and *"This says the Lord"* occur twenty-five times in just two chapters. This alone shows the enormous importance of these prophecies to the fulfillment of God's plan for the salvation of humanity.

Haggai recorded the following five messages about the events that will dramatically affect world events just before the first resurrection and Christ's return to establish his Father's kingdom on earth:

1. The instruction to construct the temple is given (Hag.1:1-12).
2. The construction of the temple is begun (Hag.1:13-15).
3. The Jews are encouraged to build the temple (Hag.2:1-9).
4. The Jews are a defiled people who need a temple (Hag.2:10-19).
5. Zerubbabel will be a personal representative of God (Hag.2:20-23).

Historical and Future Dates

It is not very often that God mentions the specific dates of events in prophecy by the day, month, and year; however, in both chapters of Haggai, specific dates are mentioned. Most likely, these same dates are also prophetic and tied to significant events in the end of the age. See the last page of this study for a summary table which outlines these five messages and the sacred calendar dates that are associated with them.

- The Instruction to Build the Temple
- The 1st Day of the 6th Month (Sacred Calendar)
- Haggai. 1:1-12 Paraphrased

"In the second year of Darius the king [a date historically established as 520 B.C.] in the sixth month, in the first day of the month [this is a New Moon] came the word of the Lord by Haggai the prophet to Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Josedech, the high

priest, saying, This says the Lord of hosts, This people say, The time is not come, the time that the Lord's house [the temple] should be built" (vs.1-2).

Historically, the temple had actually been started in 538 B.C., instead of 520 B.C., because a decree was issued that stopped its construction for almost eighteen years due to political pressure. Therefore, God sent a prophet to stir the Jews into action. It is very likely that a similar sequence of events will soon occur concerning building a temple in modern Jerusalem.

"Then came the word of the Lord by Haggai the prophet, saying, Is it time for you, O you, to dwell in your finished houses, and this house lie waste?" (vs.3-4).

These were Jews who had come out of captivity and were trying to fulfill their own desires. Today, a similar situation exists. The Israelis have been building their own nation, their own homes, and their own economy without regard for building a temple in which to worship God.

"Now therefore this says the Lord of hosts; Consider your ways [take stock of what you are doing.] You have sown much, and bring in little; you eat, but you have not enough; you drink, but you are not filled with drink; you clothe yourselves, but there is none warm; and he that earns wages earns wages to put it into a bag with holes" (vs.5-6).

This scripture was true then and it is true today. Look at the way money is wasted in Israel. Modern Israel still has problems with their economy and consistently needs to be supported by the western powers, especially the United States. Yet, Israel is a prosperous nation by world standards.

"This says the Lord of hosts; Consider your ways [think about what you are doing]. Go up to the mountain, and bring wood, and build the house [the temple]; and I will take pleasure in it, and I will be glorified, says the Lord. You looked for much, and, lo, it came to little; and when you brought it home, I did blow upon it. Why? says the Lord of hosts. Because of my house that is waste, and you run every man unto his own house. Therefore the heaven over you holds back its dew, and the earth is prevented from bearing fruit. And I called for a drought upon the land, and upon the mountains, and upon the grain, and upon the new wine, and upon the oil, and upon that which the ground brings forth, and upon men, and upon cattle, and upon all the labor of the hands" (vs.7-11).

After this stern reprimand from God through his emissary Haggai the prophet, the governor, the high priest, and the people were moved to rebuild the temple.

"Then Zerubbabel [the governor of Judah at the time this was written.] the son of Shealtiel, and Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest, with all the remnant of the people, obeyed the voice of the Lord their God, and the words of Haggai the prophet, as the Lord their God had sent him, and the people did fear before the Lord" (v12).

The Construction of the Temple Begins

The 24th Day of The 6th Month (Sacred Calendar)

"Then the Lord's messenger Haggai, spoke the Lord's message to the people, saying, I am with you, says the Lord [If you do this, God says he will be with you in doing it]. And the Lord stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and the spirit of Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest, and the spirit of all the remnant of the people; and they came and did work in the house of the Lord of hosts, their God. In the four and twentieth day of the sixth month, in the second year of Darius the king" (Hag.1:13-15 Para.).

The date given for the beginning of construction is the 24th day of the 6th month of the 2nd year of King Darius' reign (520 B.C.). Could it be that this same day and month are important in the end of the age and are a reference to when key preparations will be made that lead to the construction of a temple in Jerusalem?

The 21st day of the 7th Month (Sacred Calendar)

Haggai 2:1-23 Paraphrased

"In the seventh month, in the one and twentieth day of the month [this was also the 7th day of the Feast of Shelters/Ingathering, which is the last day of the Festival prior to the Festival of the Eighth Day], came the word of the Lord by the prophet Haggai, saying, Speak now to Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest, and to the residue of the people, saying, Who is left among you that saw this house in her first glory? And how do you see it now? Is it not in your eyes in comparison of it as nothing?" (vs.1-3).

Some of these Jews had seen the magnificent splendor of the temple that Solomon had built for God's presence to dwell in. Here, God reminds them that he requires a proper temple for his presence to dwell in instead of the ruins that the temple had become.

"Yet now be strong, O Zerubbabel, says the Lord; and be strong, O Joshua, son of Josedech, the high priest; and be strong, all you people of the land, says the Lord, and work: for I am with you, says the Lord of hosts: According to the word that I covenanted with you when you came out of Egypt, so my spirit remains among you: fear you not" (vs.4-5).

This same message is also meant for the Jews who live in this age, because God made a covenant with all of Israel, including the Jews, from the time that he brought them out of Egypt to participate in his plan for the salvation of humanity to this present day and far into the future—even after Christ's return. Notice that verses six and seven clearly place the time frame of verses four and five in the end of the age:

"For this says the Lord of hosts; Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land; And I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory, says the Lord of hosts" (vs.6-7).

Of what house is Haggai speaking? He is referring to the temple of God at Jerusalem in the end of the age and he may also be referring to the new temple that will be constructed in Jerusalem after Christ's return.

"The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, says the Lord of hosts. The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, says the Lord of hosts: and in this place will I give peace, says the Lord of hosts" (vs.8-9).

Again, this likely has two applications; one is right in the end of the age and the other can be after the return of Christ. God will grant relative peace during the time the temple is being built in the end of the age and for a short time thereafter.

The Jews are a Defiled People Who Need a Temple

The 24th Day of the 9th Month (Sacred Calendar)

"In the four and twentieth day of the ninth month in the second year of Darius, came the word of the Lord by Haggai the prophet, saying, This says the Lord of hosts; Ask now the priests concerning the law, saying, If one bear holy flesh in the skirt of his garment, and with his skirt do touch bread, or pottage, or wine, or oil, or any meat, shall it be holy? And the priests answered and said, No. Then Haggai said, If one that is unclean by a dead body touch any of these, shall it be unclean? And the priests answered and said, It shall be unclean. Then answered Haggai, and said, So is this people, and so is this nation before me, says the Lord; and so is every work of their hands; and that which they offer is unclean" (vs.10-14).

Here, God says that these Jews are physically and spiritually unclean before him. But why are they unclean? They are unclean because they do not have a temple in which to atone for their physical and spiritual sins. They cannot perform the sacrifices that are required under the Mount Sinai Covenant through which their physical and spiritual defilement can be set aside. Therefore, they are impure, and God cannot dwell with them to nurture, protect, and bless them as he desires until they again establish the temple worship system.

Jerusalem

"And now, I ask you, consider from this day forward, from before a stone was laid upon a stone in the temple of the Lord [before the construction of the temple begins]: Since those days were, when one came to an heap of twenty measures, there were but ten: when one came to the pressfat for to draw out fifty vessels out of the press, there were but twenty. I smote you with blasting and with mildew and with hail in all the labors of your hands; yet you turned not to me, says the Lord. Consider now from this day forward, from the four and twentieth day of the ninth month, even from the day that the foundation of the Lord's temple was established. Set your heart" (vs.15-19).

Here, we see that those who are to participate in the building of the temple and the establishment of the sacrificial worship system must carefully consider the enormity of the events that they are about to set in motion. Notice that they are to give themselves to this task without reservation of any kind.

Zerubbabel Will be a Personal Representative of God on Earth

"And again the word of the Lord came to Haggai in the four and twentieth day of the month, saying, Speak to Zerubbabel, governor [high position in

the Israeli government] of Judah, saying, *I will shake the heavens and the earth; And I will overthrow the throne of kingdoms, and I will destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the heathen; and I will overthrow the chariots, and those that ride in them; and the horses and their riders shall come down, every one by the sword of his brother. In that day, says the Lord of hosts, will I take you, O Zerubbabel [high ranking government official], my servant, the son of Shealtiel, says the Lord, and will make you as a signet [a symbol of royal authority]: for I have chosen you, says the Lord of hosts"* (vs.20-23).

In order to understand this prophecy, it is important to keep in mind that all of this prophecy is in the context of a prophet being sent to command a governmental official in the Jewish nation to initiate the process of building the temple just before Jesus Christ's powerful intervention into world affairs. Zerubbabel is called to be a signet (i.e., an authorized seal) for God , because he is given the authority to use the awesome power of God to carry out his responsibilities during the end of the age.

Specific dates for Events before Christ's return

Below are a number of things that should be considered when trying to understand the specific dates that are noted in Haggai's prophecy:

Because Haggai's prophecy has prophetic duality (a past and future fulfillment) and because there are a number of specific days and months mentioned, these dates probably have prophetic importance.

It is clear from the prophecies of Haggai and Zechariah that, in the end of the age, God will again be using a Zerubbabel (an Israeli government official) and a Joshua (the high priest of the temple worship system) to be in charge of the building of the temple.

In relation to building the temple in Jerusalem, the prophetic time line that is shown in the passages of the Great Pyramid of Giza reveals that the same basic sequence of events that occurred in 520 B.C. will occur again before Christ's return.

With the above information and the background material that we have reviewed, we can review the specific prophetic dates, events, and people mentioned in Haggai that surround the future construction of the temple in Jerusalem.

The 1st Day of the 6th Month (Sacred Calendar)

The Instruction to Build the Temple

Haggai 1:1

The message given on the 1st day of the 6th sacred month, concerns God's prophet being sent to contact Zerubbabel and Joshua regarding the need to rebuild the temple. Therefore, it is highly likely that God will send a prophet to the modern equivalent of Zerubbabel (an Israeli government official) and Joshua (the one who will become the high priest) on the first day (a new moon) of the 6th sacred month to instruct them to move the temple building project forward.

The 24th Day of The 6th Month (Sacred Calendar)

Temple Construction Begins

Haggai 1:15

The 24th day of the 6th sacred month is just a short time before the Festival of Trumpets. This seems to be the time when the Lord inspires Zerubbabel and Joshua to do work on the temple along with a remnant of the House of Judah. If this applies to the end of the age, it may mean that construction of the temple begins on this date.

It seems likely that, shortly before this, there will be some kind of agreement involving the Islamic nations and the Israelis which will allow a temple to be built.

The 21st Day Of The 7th Month (Sacred Calendar)

God's Presence in the Temple

Haggai 2:1

The 21st day of the 7th sacred month is the 7th day of the Festival of Shelters/Ingathering. This event in Haggai 2 shows God's prophet encouraging Zerubbabel (Israeli government official) and Joshua (the High Priest) to remain strong and telling them about the events that will shake up the world in the near future. The prophet tells them to be strong, because God will be with them in

building the temple and establishing the sacrificial system of worship, which will lead to God shaking the nations, the earth, and the heavens.

It seems unlikely that, at this point in time, these two men will be aware of the tremendous task that lies ahead of them as personal representatives of Jesus Christ. They probably will be unaware of their part in bringing massive destruction upon the earth, including the destruction of the pagan religious and governmental systems of this world.

The 24th Day Of The 9th Month (Sacred Calendar)

Israel Is A Defiled Nation

Haggai 2:10-14

The last date that is specifically mentioned is the 24th day of the 9th month on the sacred calendar.

Notice that the prophet addresses the priesthood as a whole regarding the understanding of defilement. This prophetically shows that the people in the modern nation of Israel are living in a defiled condition before God and need to repent of their evil ways and receive national purification through God's sacrificial system of worship.

The Signet for God

Haggai 2:20-23 Paraphrased

The 24th day of the 9th month is also mentioned as the time when the prophet is given the charge to tell Zerubbabel that he will be God's signet on earth during the time when God pours out his wrath on a wicked and perverse generation:

"And again the word of the Lord came to Haggai in the four and twentieth day of the month, saying, Speak to Zerubbabel, governor of Judah, saying, I will shake the heavens and the earth. And I will overthrow the throne of kingdoms, and I will destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the (nations); and I will overthrow the chariots, and those who ride in them; and the horses and their riders shall come down, every one by the sword of his brother" (vs.20-22).

Here, we see the prophet describing what is surely going to come to pass after the temple is built in Jerusalem. The peace that comes to the Israelis during the

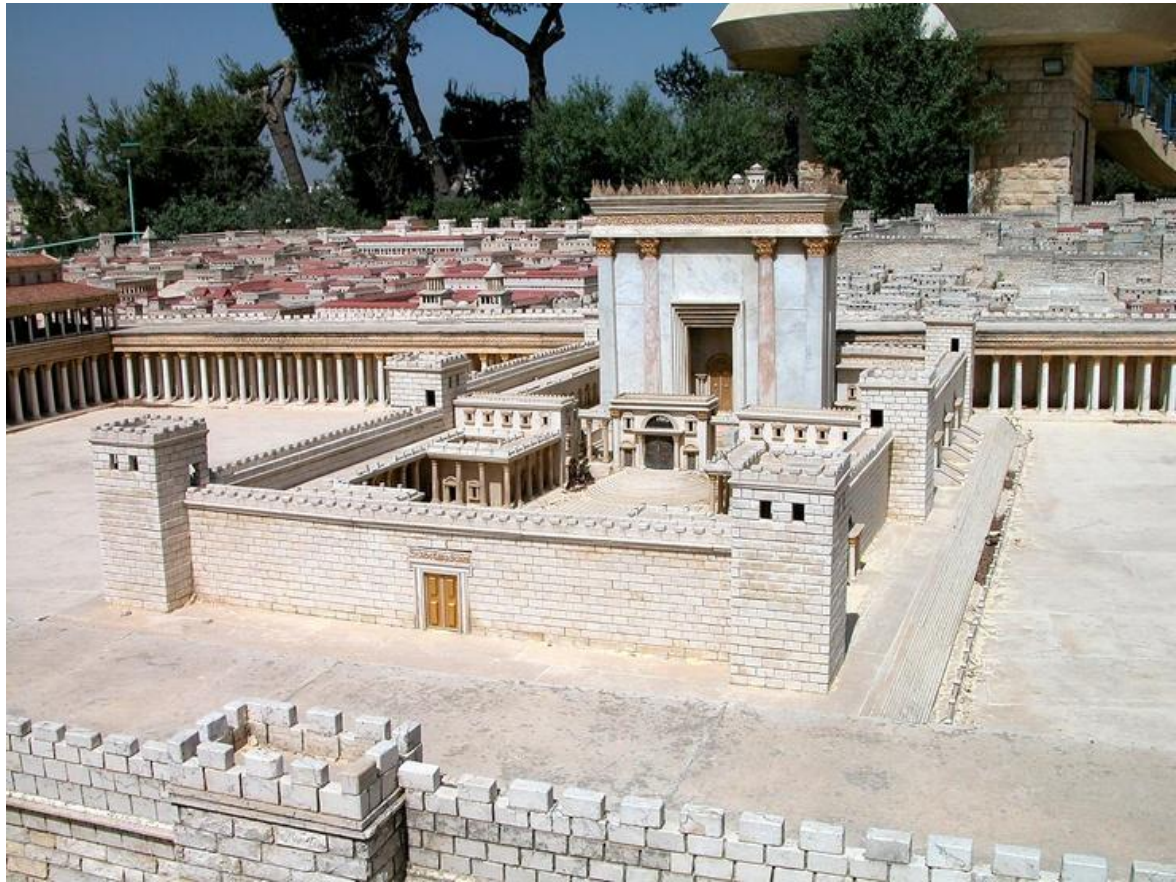
construction of the temple will be short lived, because Jesus Christ will intervene in world events and begin to pour out the wrath of God and overthrow the nations of earth through his signet.

"In that day, says the Lord of hosts, will I take you, O Zerubbabel, my servant, the son of Shealtiel, says the Lord, and will make you as a signet: For I have chosen you, says the Lord of hosts" (v23).

Summary

There is a lot of information packed into Haggai's short prophecy, which seems to show that, in the latter days, God will likely send a prophet to urge an Israeli governmental official (the prophetic Zerubbabel) and the one who will become the High Priest (the prophetic Joshua) to initiate an action that will lead to the building of a temple in Jerusalem.

It is very clear from the Book of Zechariah and the Book of Revelation that the prophetic Zerubbabel (an Israeli governmental official) and the prophetic Joshua (the high priest) who officiates over the temple system are going to have a major role in the construction of the temple after which they will be led to conversion as sons of the Father's new creation and assume their respective roles in preaching the gospel and doing God's will to bring about the return of Jesus Christ as King of kings.



Model of Herod's Temple

Commentary on the Book of Zechariah

Introduction

Zechariah is the great prophet of the restoration, and, as stated in the introduction to Haggai, was contemporary with him. The prophecies in both books are dated. These are as follows:

In the sixth month of Darius's second year: Haggai 1:1-15

In the seventh month of the same year: Haggai 2:1-23

In the eighth month, the same year: Zechariah 1:1-21

In the ninth month, the same year: Haggai 2:1-23

In the eleventh month, the same year: Zechariah 1:1-21; Zechariah 2:1-13; Zechariah 3:1-10; Zechariah 4:1-14; Zechariah 5:1-11; Zechariah 6:1-15

In the fourth year of Darius, ninth month: Zechariah 7:1-14; Zechariah 8:1-23; Zechariah 9:1-17; Zechariah 10:1-12; Zechariah 11:1-17; Zechariah 12:1-14; Zechariah 13:1-9; Zechariah 14:1-21

Zechariah is named in Ezra 5:1; Ezra 6:14; he was of priestly descent, which we learn by consulting Nehemiah 12:4; Nehemiah 12:16. His name means “Jehovah remembers.” He was the son of Berechiah, which means “Jehovah will bless;” and his grandfather’s name was Iddo; Iddo means “the appointed time.” These are significant names; one might say the great prophetic message of Zechariah is given in these three names in a nutshell. For the covenant-keeping God remembers His people, which the visions and messages of Zechariah show. When He remembers them He will bless them, but it will be at the appointed time, and the appointed time has not yet come, hence the greater part of Zechariah remains unfulfilled.

He was born in Babylon, and when he returned to the land of his fathers he was a child. In his vision he is addressed as a young man, so that he was quite young when called into the responsible position of a prophet. As to the historical setting of his prophecies, it is the same as Haggai’s, and we refer the reader to what we have said there.

According to ancient sources he lived to be a very old man, and was buried alongside of Haggai in Jerusalem; but this cannot be verified. Jewish tradition says that he was a member of the great synagogue, and took an active part in providing for the liturgical service of the new temple. The Septuagint version of the Old Testament ascribes to him the composition of Psalms 137:1-9; Psalms 138:1-8, and to Haggai and Zachariah Psalms 145:1-21; Psalms 146:1-10; Psalms 147:1-20; Psalms 148:1-14; and the same do other versions like the Peshito and the Vulgate. Some expositors have been so superficial in their statements that they identified him with the Zechariah who was slain by Joash of Judah, between the temple and the altar, as mentioned in 2 Chronicles 24:20-23.

His Great Message

Zechariah in his message does not rebuke the people on account of their slackness in building the house of the Lord, as we learned Haggai did, though his great prophecies were given to encourage the remnant in their work. The horizon of Zechariah’s visions and prophecies is far more extended than the horizon of the other minor prophets. He covers the entire future of Israel and leads onward from his days to the time when Messiah comes to Jerusalem, when His own received Him not. He pictures the condition of the nation after the rejection of Christ, and then leads up to the time of His return and the happy

results which follow the repentance of the remnant, when they shall look upon Him whom they pierced.

The Gentile world-powers, as prophetically announced in Daniel's great visions, are seen by him as domineering over Jerusalem; and how the Lord will finally deal with these powers. The last siege of Jerusalem, and what is connected with that siege, the tribulation, the deliverance by the visible coming of the Lord, and the resultant kingdom, concludes his book. It is indeed a complete prophetic history of Israel and the times of the Gentiles from the captivity to the end of these times. His book has rightly been called by the same name as the last book of the Bible, the Apocalypse--an unveiling. And there are certain features which identify Zechariah in some measure with the book of Revelation. Zechariah may well be placed alongside of Isaiah and Daniel.

The Messianic Predictions in Zechariah

Zechariah has more to say about Christ, His person, His work and His glory than all the other minor prophets combined. We mention here the more direct predictions found in the book; there are others, which will be pointed out in the annotations.

I. He speaks of Christ as "the Branch." This is one of the names of our Lord revealed to Isaiah and Jeremiah Isaiah 4:2; Jeremiah 23:5. Zechariah speaks of Him twice under this title, in chapters 3 and 4. II. A great prediction concerning Christ is found in the sixth chapter, when the prophet is commanded to order the crowning of the high-priest, symbolical of our Lord, who is the crowned King-Priest. III. In Zechariah 9:9-10 we have the familiar passage quoted in the New Testament concerning Christ's entrance into Jerusalem. In this passage the first and the second coming of our Lord are blended together. IV. He speaks of Him as the Shepherd, and the price of His betrayal, the thirty pieces of silver, also quoted in the New Testament. Zechariah 11:12-13 and Matthew 27:9-10. V. Another great Messianic prophecy is recorded in Zechariah 12:10. Here His death on the cross is predicted, and that He is the pierced One, on whom they shall look, on account of whom they shall yet mourn. (See John 19:1-42, and Revelation 1:1-20.) VI. Still another prophecy relating to the sufferings of Christ is Zechariah 13:7. The sword is to awake against the Man, who is the fellow of God; that sword is to smite Him. VII. Finally, we mention the passage in the last chapter, where the prophet describes Him as coming for the salvation of His waiting people, and that His feet in that day shall stand on the Mount of Olives. It is He who was seen last standing on the Mount of Olives, with the promise of His return "in like manner."

As stated before, these passages are the prominent ones, but not by any means all the predictions concerning Israel's Messiah.

There is an interesting Jewish work on Zechariah, the Yalkut of Zechariah. It gives interesting comment on his prophecies. The great teacher Abarbanel confessed his inability to interpret these visions. How could he with his denials that Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ? And the much honored Jewish exegete, Solomon Ben Jarchi, declared "his prophecy is very abstruse, for it contains visions resembling dreams, which want interpreting; and we shall never be able to discover the true interpretation until the teacher of righteousness arrives."

That teacher, the Holy spirit, has come. He guides us now into all truth; He makes plain things to come, as revealed in the prophetic Word. By comparing Scripture with Scripture, and avoiding the "private interpretation" against which Peter warns 2 Peter 1:1-21 we understand the visions, which two of the greatest Hebrew scholars and teachers declared unexplainable.

The Division of Zechariah

For a correct understanding of the book, the correct divisions must be first of all ascertained. We give, therefore, first the scope of the book. After an introduction comprising the first six verses of the first chapter, we have the record of his great night-visions.

1. The Vision of the Man upon the Red Horse Among the Myrtles (Zechariah 1:7-17) 2. The Four Horns and the Four Smiths (Zechariah 1:18-21) 3. The Man with the Measuring Line (Chapter 2) 4. The Vision concerning the Cleansing of the High-Priest (Chapter 3) 5. The Vision of the Candlestick with the Two Olive Trees (Chapter 4) 6. The Vision of the Flying Roll (Zechariah 5:1-4) 7. The Woman in the Ephah (Zechariah 5:5-11) 8. The Vision of the Four Chariots (Zechariah 6:1-8)

Some have made ten visions out of it instead of eight; there is no need for that. The vision which they divided is the one in Zechariah 1:18-21. But this is one vision; and so is the vision in chapter 4. After these visions had been given the young prophet was commanded to make crowns of silver and gold and crown the high-priest. It was a great symbolical action, foretelling Him, who wore on earth the crown of thorns, and who will be crowned with many crowns when the night is gone and the day breaks.

This is the first section of the book. The second section is contained in chapters 7 and 8. It is a kind of parenthesis. Questions concerning certain fasts had been

asked by the prophet; they were answered by the Lord and their interesting answers are recorded in these two chapters.

The third section is contained in chapters 9-14; it is the most majestic part of the book. It is arranged in two parts, each beginning with the phrase “The Burden of the Word of the Lord.” The first burden is Zechariah 9:1 and the second is Zechariah 12:1. It reveals in a remarkable manner the future of Jerusalem, so intensely interesting to every true believer in our significant times. We follow this threefold division in our analysis and annotations.

1. The Night Vision

Chapter 1

- 1. The introduction (Zechariah 1:1-6)*
- 2. The first night vision (Zechariah 1:7-17)*
- 3. The second night vision (Zechariah 1:18-21)*

1:1-17. Vision of the man among the myrtles

Verse 1. Preface

Verses 2-6. The call to repentance

Zechariah 1:1-6. The first utterance of Zechariah concerns the past. “The LORD hath been sore displeased with your fathers.” They were a disobedient, stiff-necked people. The pre-exilic prophets had called them to repentance, but they did not hearken. Then he gives the message to turn to the Lord, with the promise that He will turn to them; they should not be like their fathers. And their fathers, where were they? They had passed away like the disobedient ones in the wilderness; God’s judgment and displeasure had overtaken them and they perished.

Verses 7-17. The man among the myrtle trees

Zechariah 1:7-17. After this opening message with its call to return, delivered probably before the assembled congregation, the prophet received his great night-visions. These were not mere dreams, but the things he describes passed before him in divine vision. He beheld them in one night. They were not only given in one night, but just as one followed the other with out interval, so are they closely connected, giving progressively coming events. There is, of course,

to a certain extent in some of these visions the message of hope for the Jewish remnant of that day, but the visions concern the future, and can only be understood in the light of other prophecies concerning the end of the age and the glorious future of Israel and Jerusalem. To apply them to the Church produces the greatest possible confusion. We shall see how these visions concern the Gentiles first and the overthrow of the world-powers, followed by the blessings and glory promised to Israel, which all will be given to the nation in the day when Gentile dominion ceases forever. When the visions end, the morning comes after that memorable night of revelation, the command to crown the high-priest is given.

Without quoting the text in full we give the interpretation of each vision. He beheld an army of riders upon different colored horses, led by a man riding a red horse, who is the center of the vision. There is an interpreting heavenly messenger, to whom the prophet turns to find out who the riders are. They do not represent the Persians, as some expositors have stated; they are angels. It is the man upon the red horse who speaks. "These are they whom the Lord hath sent to walk to and fro through the earth." The riders upon the horses give their report to the man in the middle. "Behold, all the earth sitteth still and is at rest."

Who is the rider upon the red horse? He is called the "Angel of the LORD." There is no question but that the rider and the Angel of the LORD are the same person. And the Angel of the LORD in the Old Testament is an uncreated Being; He is the Son of God in His pre-incarnation glory. There are three very good reasons for this interpretation. 1. The color red identifies him with our Lord. He is the Lamb of God who shed His blood in redemption; He is the Lion of the tribe of Judah (Revelation 5:1-14) who will arise in judgment upon the nation in the coming days of vengeance and trample His enemies under foot (Isaiah 63:1-19). 2. He is the Leader as well as the Center of the heavenly hosts; they are subject unto Him; all things are in His hands. 3. He makes intercession, which marks Him as the one who is the intercessor before God in behalf of His people. Our larger exposition of Zechariah quotes the Jewish interpretation (Studies in Zechariah, pp. 11-12).

The report of the angelic hosts was that the earth sitteth still and is at rest. The nations were at rest, in the state of prosperity; but His people is in trouble, the land of promise under Gentile rule and dominion. While the cities of the nations were increased and had plenty, the city of the King was under the hoof of the Gentiles; His people suffered. Such is the condition of things throughout the time of the Gentiles. In our comment, written in 1899 we made the following remarks:

“Prosperity, universal prosperity, and with it universal peace, is the cry at the close of another century, and will be more so as we advance towards the end of this age. Civilization, world conquest, commercial extension, and a universal peace, seem to be the leading thoughts among the nations of our times. Truly it is realized by some that our boasted civilization, liberty and prosperity, is nothing but a smoldering volcano which may burst open at any moment and make an end of all boasting; but the majority of the people even in Christendom are sadly deluding themselves with idle dreams. And what of God’s thoughts and His eternal purposes? What of His oath-bound covenant promises? They are being misinterpreted, set aside and forgotten. Thus it will continue till the climax is reached, so clearly foretold in the Second Psalm.”

This forecast has come true; the great war has come and gone and now the age is rapidly approaching its predicted end.

Then follows in the vision the intercessory cry of the Angel of the LORD. It concerns in the first place the indignation of the seventy years. But that dispersion is the prophetic type of their greater dispersion. What was true then concerning the nations and the state of Jerusalem, is true of the present and future. The nations helped forward their affliction by hating the Jew. The great sin of the nations is Anti-semitism, which is the result of not believing the Word of God. The hatred of the Gentiles will culminate in the end of the age in coming against the partially restored nation, as we shall learn at the close of our prophecy. Then the assurance is given that the Lord in His jealousy will remember His people and Jerusalem will be chosen and Zion comforted.

1:18-21. Vision of the four horns and four craftsmen

1:18-21. Israel triumphant over her foes

Zechariah 1:18-21. He saw next four powerful horns, the emblems of the powerful Gentile nations who have scattered Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem. The four horns are the same four world-powers announced in Nebuchadnezzar’s dream and in Daniel’s vision Daniel 2:1-49; Daniel 7:1-28. They are symbolized by the locusts in their four stages Joel 1:1-20. Four smiths appear in the vision to fray them and to cast them out. The vision teaches two facts: first, the horns will be broken and cast down; and in the second place, God has for every power which has sinned against His people a corresponding instrument, to overcome and to break into pieces.

LIST POSTEXILIC RULERS OVER PALESTINE

PERSIAN PERIOD (550-333)

Cyrus II (the Great)	550-530
Cambyes II	530-522
Darius I	522-486
Xerxes I [Ahasuerus]	486-465
Artaxerxes I (Longimanus)	464-424
Xerxes II	424
Darius II	423-404
Artaxerxes II (Mnemon)	404-358
Artaxerxes III (Ochus)	358-338
Darius III	336-333

HELLENISTIC PERIOD (333-166/63)

Alexander (the Great)		333-323	
Palestine Disputed between	Ptolemys	and Seleucids	
Ptolemy I Soter	323-283	Seleucus I Nicator	312-281
Ptolemy II Philadelphus	282-246	Antiochus I Soter	281-261
Ptolemy III Euergetes	246-222	Antiochus II Theos	261-246
Ptolemy IV Philopator	222-204	Seleucus II Callinicus	246-225
Ptolemy V Epiphanes	204-180	Seleucus III Soter	225-223
Jerusalem High Priests under	Seleucid Rule;	Maccabean Revolt	
Onias II		Antiochus III the Great	223-187
Onias III		Seleucus IV Philopator	187-175
Jason		Antiochus IV Epiphanes	175-164
Judas Maccabaeus	166-160	Antiochus V Eupator	164-162
Jonathan	160-142	Demetrius I Soter	162-150
Simon	142-135	Alexander Balas	150-145
John Hyrcanus I	135-104	Demetrius II	145-140/Antiochus VI 145-142
Aristobulus I	104-103	Antiochus VII Sidetes	138-129
Alexander Jannaeus	103-76	Demetrius II Nicator (restored)	129-125
Alexandra	76-67	Antiochus VIII Grypus	125-96
Aristobulus II		66-63	

Chapter 2

2. Vision of the surveyor

1. *The man with the measuring line* (Zechariah 2:1-2)
2. *The message of the third night vision* (Zechariah 2:3-9)
3. *The glorious kingdom* (Zechariah 2:10-12)

Verses 1-3. The measuring line

Verses 4-13. Promises proceeding from the vision

Zechariah 2:1-2. The third night vision is one of the coming glory. The number three stands in the Word of God for resurrection, life from the dead. Thus in Hosea, concerning Israel, “After two days Thou wilt revive us, and on the third day Thou wilt raise us up” Hosea 6:2. In this third vision Zechariah sees the glorious restoration of Israel, which has been the burden of so many prophecies, and the glory which is connected with that restoration. In this night vision Zechariah hears of a restoration and of a glory which has never yet been fulfilled in the history of God’s people. Those teachers of the Word who see in Zechariah’s night visions nothing but fulfilled prophecy, cannot answer certain questions satisfactorily, and their only refuge must be a spiritualizing of this restoration. Another thought before we take up this third vision. The vision of restoration comes after the enemies of Israel have been cast down. That prophecy might be fulfilled; prophecy about a believing, suffering Jewish remnant; prophecy concerning Jacob’s trouble, etc., a mock restoration, generally termed a restoration in unbelief, is to take place. There can be no doubt whatever that we are privileged to see the beginning of this restoration of part of the Jewish nation to the land of the fathers in unbelief. It is one of the signs of the nearness of that event for which the Church hopes, prays and waits: “our gathering together unto Him.” The world and the lukewarm Christian do not see it, but he who loves the Word and lives in the Word, has eyes to see and a hearing ear, and knows what is soon coming. The true restoration, however, will only come as it is seen so clearly in these night visions after the enemies have been overcome, the horns cast down, the image smashed--in other words, after the Lord has come.

First stands the man with the measuring line. He is to bear witness to the coming enlargement of Jerusalem. Similar visions where measuring takes place are found in Ezekiel 41:1-26, where the future temple is measured, and in Revelation 11:1-19 a reed is given to John to measure the temple of God, which

is the temple erected by the Jews in unbelief during the tribulation period. Here it is the measuring of the city.

Zechariah 2:3-9. The angel who had talked with Zechariah was met by another angel. He brings the message to Zechariah, who is addressed as “this young man.” The coming restoration and enlargement of Jerusalem is announced. The city is to be inhabited as villages, which denotes the peace and safety which Jerusalem will enjoy in the day of her true restoration. It will be the temptation for the enemy, Gog and Magog, to invade the land. (See Ezekiel 38:1-23; Ezekiel 39:1-29.) The invasion of Gog and Magog in Revelation 20:1-15 is after the millennium; the one in Ezekiel is in the beginning of the millennium [i.e., end of the tribulation. Ed.]. Then Zechariah hears in the message that the Lord will be Himself a wall of fire unto Jerusalem; He will be the glory in the midst of her. Glory and defence are combined, they always go together Isaiah 4:1-6. This was not the case in the restored Jerusalem after the captivity. It is altogether future. What a glory it will be when every eye sees Him, when His visible glory will be once more established in the land, from which its knowledge spreads over the earth till it covers all, like the waters cover the deep! Habakkuk 2:14. Then they are summoned to return from the land of the North. Millions of Jews are living and suffering in the great land of the north, Russia. In that day they will return to the old homeland. They will escape out of the clutches of Babylon, the final Babylon. He calls the believing remnant the “apple of His eye.” He will guard and keep them.

Zechariah 2:10-12. The singing times have come Zephaniah 3:1-20. Zion rejoices for He dwells in their midst Isaiah 12:1-6. Then the nations are joined to the Lord in that day, not to the Church, for the true Church is in glory, but they will be joined to Israel in the kingdom. The third vision closes with an exhortation similar to the one in Habakkuk 2:1-20. All flesh is to be silent before the Lord. Now is the time when God is silent. The flesh speaks now, for it is man’s day. But our God shall come and not keep silent Psalms 60:1-12. Then all the flesh, with its fruits, will have to be silent before Him in that day.



The Menora – as the seven-branched candlestick

Chapter 3

3. Vision of Joshua's cleansing

1. *The fourth night vision (Zechariah 3:1-5)*
2. *The message of the vision (Zechariah 3:6-10)*

Verses 1-3. Israel as defiled and condemned

Verses 4-5. Israel as pardoned and repositioned

Zechariah 3:1-5. The fourth vision is like the first and second, closely connected with the foregoing one. It gives the crowning event of Israel's restoration. The prophet recognizes in the figure, which is seen by him, Joshua the high priest, who is standing before the angel of the Lord, while at his right hand stands Satan to oppose him. Joshua was not clothed with his clean, priestly robes, but he wears filthy garments. Jehovah rebukes Satan and terms Jerusalem a brand plucked from the fire. After the accuser is rebuked, the filthy garments of the high-priest are removed, his iniquity is forgiven, and he is clothed with festal raiment. The prophet is so carried away with the vision that he asks that a clean mitre is to be put upon his head. And now, after the high-priest is thus clothed, the Angel of the Lord charges him with an important message: If thou wilt walk in My ways and keep My charge, thou shalt judge My house and also keep My courts. I will give thee access among those standing here, etc. The servant--the branch--is promised, and the stone which is laid before Joshua is to

have seven eyes. The iniquity of this land is to be removed in one day, and the vision closes with the peaceful scene, every man inviting his neighbor under the vine and under the fig tree.

The high-priest Joshua in this vision stands as a type of the sinful nation and her priestly calling. Like Joshua in filthy garments, the nation is unclean and defiled. Yet in spite of his filthy garments Joshua was still the high-priest. The gifts and calling of God are without repentance; Israel, in the purposes of God, is still the priest. In the vision Satan is seen, true to his name, the accuser.

He is the enemy of Israel. He has tried in the past to hurt and to destroy the nation of destiny. He knows the purposes of God concerning Israel better than many a learned doctor of divinity, and therefore, he has opposed that people and opposes them still. His opposition has been mostly through nations. How much could be said on this topic! The end of this age will reveal the enemy of Israel, the adversary, as never before in the history of the world. There is to be war in heaven; Michael and his angels going forth to war with the dragon; and the dragon warred, and his angels, and they prevailed not, neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast down, the old Serpent, he that is called the Devil and Satan, the Deceiver of the whole world, he was cast down to the earth and his angels were cast down with him Revelation 12:7-17. His wrath will be directed against Israel and Jerusalem. It is the time of which Daniel spoke. "And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of Thy people; and there shall be a time of trouble such as never was since there was a nation, even to that same time Daniel 12:11." Once more Satan will try to destroy the people, but the Lord shall rebuke him. Israel will be again, as so often before, like a brand plucked out of the fire. So it has been in the past. Way back when Israel was in Egypt and God was about to send the deliverer, He called Moses from out of the burning bush--Israel's true type, burning, but never consumed. Oh, how the fire of persecution and adversity has been raging, but again and again the hand of God snatched the burning brand out of the fire at the right moment. The Lord who hath chosen Jerusalem will rebuke Satan. This has not yet come. The coming Lord will commission an angel out of heaven, having the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand. And he will lay hold on the dragon--the old serpent which is the Devil and Satan--and bind him for a thousand years, and cast him into the abyss and shut it and seal it over him Revelation 20:1-15). Then follows the cleansing of Israel and the new charge, all so clearly given in this vision.

The filthy garments are removed by those that stand before the angel of the Lord. The iniquity is taken away, and in place of the filthy garments there is the rich apparel and the fair mitre upon the head. How blessedly all this is waiting

for its fulfillment in Israel's regeneration! When He appears after the times of overturning, He whose right it is, His people Israel will be found by Him in true penitence, acknowledging their offence. It will be a national repentance, a mourning on account of Him, which Zechariah describes in detail in the twelfth chapter.

Verses 6-7. Covenant of priesthood renewed with Joshua

Verses 8-10. Prediction of restored Israel under the figure of Messiah, the Branch

Zechariah 3:6-10. Israel was disobedient and did not keep the first charge. It is now repeated, and gives Israel's future calling after their cleansing. It will be threefold. 1. Judging in the house of the LORD, and from there ruling and judging nations, for Israel will be the head of the nations. The Church will then not be on earth, but occupy her glorious place in the new Jerusalem above the earth. 2. Israel will keep His courts. That is, Israel will attend to the millennial temple, which will become the house of prayer for all nations, which all the former temples were not. 3. Israel will have places to walk amongst those who stand by, that is, among the nations, in priestly ministry. The saved remnant will then be "men which are a wonder," the miracles of His grace and power. Then the servant, the Branch is announced; a definite Messianic prediction. The stone engraven, with seven eyes upon it, must also mean the redeemed nation, the foundation of the kingdom, filled with His Spirit, for we read in connection with it, "I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day." A picture of the conditions of peace and prosperity in the kingdom concludes the fourth night vision.

Chapter 4

5. Vision of the golden lampstand

This vision portrays Israel as the light of the world under Messiah King-Priest.

1. The fifth night vision (Zechariah 4:1-10)

2. The questions of the prophet answered (Zechariah 4:11-14)

Verses 1-5. The symbolism of the vision

Verses 6-10. The purpose of the vision

Zechariah 4:1-10. There was a rest for the prophet between the fourth and fifth night vision. He had fallen into a deep sleep. He may have been overcome by the grand and important visions, and is now awakened by the angel with the question, "What seest thou?" The new vision is a very striking one. A golden candlestick appears before the seer. An oil receiver is seen on top, from which the oil flows to the seven lamps of the candlestick through seven pipes. Two olive trees stand alongside of the candlestick and hang their fruit-laden branches over the golden bowl, filling it with oil, which flows through the seven pipes into the seven lamps. The question of the prophet, "What are these, my lord?" is answered by the angel with this statement, "This is the word of Jehovah to Zerubbabel, saying, Not by might and not by power but by My Spirit, saith the LORD of Hosts. Who art thou, Oh great mountain, before Zerubbabel? Be a plain! He shall bring forth the top stone with shoutings of grace, grace unto it.... The hands of Zerubbabel who have laid the foundation shall also finish it, and they shall rejoice and see the plummet in the hand of Zerubbabel--even the seven. The eyes of the LORD shall run to and fro through the entire earth."

The Church in the New Testament is typified by a candlestick. The oil is the emblem of the Holy Spirit. But this is not in view in this vision.

We call attention to the fact that the vision is one which speaks of perfection, completion, fullness. The perfect and divine number seven is found three times in the vision, seven lamps, seven pipes and seven eyes. The seven lamps are united to one stem, this is union, and above it, is a golden bowl. The Spirit conquers, and not power or might does it, but His power. The great mountain becomes a plain. The top stone is brought forth and crowns the building which is finished by Zerubbabel. Shoutings, "Grace, grace, unto it," are heard, and the seven eyes run to and fro through the whole earth. It is a vision of fullness and accomplishment. The candlestick shines and sheds its glorious light, its pure gold glitters and reflects the light of the seven lamps. The bowl is filled with oil, and the two olive trees give a continual supply. The high mountain removed, the temple finished, joy and victory abound. The candlestick in the vision is exactly like the one in the tabernacle, only the two olive trees are something new. The candlestick in the tabernacle represents Christ, the light of the world, and is likewise a type of the Jewish theocracy. Theocracy, the government of this earth by the immediate direction of God, is once to be established, and when it is, it will be like a bright and glorious candlestick shedding light and dispersing the darkness. We think the Yalkut on Zechariah (a Hebrew commentary), is not so very far out of the way when it says, "the golden candlestick is Israel." It seems to us very clear that the vision represents the Jewish theocracy restored, Israel in their glorious inheritance as the light of the world.

Verses 11-14. The prophet favoured with a full explanation

Zechariah 4:11-14. The prophet asks two questions concerning the two olive trees and the branches which gave the oil through the golden pipe. The two olive trees, filled with the supply of the Spirit, are in all probability the two witnesses of Revelation 11:1-19. Their testimony is given during the second half of the last seven years of the times of the Gentiles, Daniel's seventieth week Daniel 9:1-27. It is the time of the great tribulation and these two witnesses stand in close relation with the establishment of the kingdom. See annotations on Revelation.

Chapter 5

5. Visions of the flying scroll and the measuring basket

1. The sixth vision (Zechariah 5:1-4)

2. The seventh vision (Zechariah 5:5-11)

Verses 1-4. The flying scroll

Zechariah 5:1-4. The three remaining night visions are of a different character. The first visions the prophet had were visions of comfort for Jerusalem and the dispersed nation, the overthrow of Babylon and all their enemies, divine forgiveness and the theocracy restored. Now follow the last three visions, and these are visions of judgment. Judgment precedes Israel's restoration, and is very prominently connected with it.

The sixth night vision is the one of the flying roll. The prophet's eyes seem to have been closed after the fifth vision, for we read, "And I lifted up my eyes again." The flying roll he sees is twenty cubits long and ten cubits broad. The interpreting angel tells the prophet that it is the curse that goeth forth over the face of the whole land; for every one that stealeth shall be cut off on this side according to it, and every one that sweareth shall be cut off on that side according to it. The LORD of hosts has brought it forth and it is to enter into the house of the thief, and into the house of him that sweareth by His Name to a falsehood, and it shall lodge in the midst of His house and consume it, both its wood and its stone.

That this vision means judgment is evident at the first glance. Ezekiel had a similar vision. "And when I looked, behold, an hand was sent unto me; and, lo, a roll of a book was therein; And he spread it before me; and it was written within and without: and there was written therein lamentations, and mourning, and woe (Ezekiel 2:9-10)." Ezekiel was to eat that book. This reminds us at once of the

books in Revelation (chapters 5 and 10), which are likewise connected with God's judgments in the earth. The flying roll is written on both sides, signifying the two tables of stone, the law of God. Stealing and swearing falsely are mentioned because the one is found on the one side of the two tables of stone, and the other on the other side. However, it is no longer "Thou shalt not," but on the flying roll are written the curses, the awful curses against the transgressors of God's law which are now about to be put into execution. The curse is found in its awful details, as it refers to an apostate people in Deuteronomy 27:1-26; Deuteronomy 28:1-68. The roll is of immense size, and on it are the dread curses of an angry God. The vision must have been one of exceeding great terror. Imagine a roll, probably illumined at night with fire, moving over the heavens, and on it the curses of an eternal God--wherever it moves its awful message is seen; nothing is hid from its awe-inspiring presence. It reminds one of the fiery handwriting on the wall in the king's palace. Surely such an awful judgment is coming by and by, when our God will keep silence no longer. One of the sublimest judgment Psalms, the Fiftieth, mentions something similar to this flying roll. "When thou sawest a thief then thou consentedst with him, and hast been partaker with adulterers. Thou givest thy mouth to evil, and thy tongue frameth deceit. Thou sittest and speaketh against thy brother, thou slanderest thine own mother's son. These things hast thou done, and I kept silence; thou thoughtest that I was altogether such a one as thyself. but I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes" Psalms 50:18-23. The flying roll stands undoubtedly in connection with wickedness, theft, and false swearing, as it is found in so many forms in unbelieving Israel, but it finds also a large application in the judgment of wickedness throughout the earth in the glorious day of His appearing.

Verses 5-11. The measuring basket

Zechariah 5:5-11. The angel commands the prophet to lift up his eyes to behold another startling vision. What are the leading figures in the vision? An ephah--which is a Jewish measure standing here for commerce. The eyes of all the land (or earth) are upon it. Commercialism is very prominent in Revelation in connection with the full measure of wickedness, the climax of ungodliness. In Revelation 18:1-24 merchants are mentioned who have grown rich through the abundance of her delicacies. Then the merchants are seen weeping, for no man buys their merchandise any more. And then a long list follows, including all the articles of modern commerce. Compare this with the awful description of the last times in James 5:1-20. Rich men are commanded to weep and howl, for miseries are come upon them. They heaped treasure together for the last days, and it was a heaping together by fraud, dishonesty in keeping back the hire of the laborers. They lived in pleasure (luxuriously) and were wanton. Indeed, here

is that burning question of the day, capital and labor, and its final outcome, misery and judgment upon commercialism, riches heaped up, and all in wickedness. In Habakkuk 2:12 the woe of judgment of that coming glory of the Lord is pronounced upon him that buildeth a town with blood and established a city by iniquity! The people are seen laboring for the fire and wearying themselves for vanity. Luxuries increase, riches, etc., are mentioned in the second and third chapters of Isaiah, chapters of judgment. Other passages could be quoted, but these are sufficient for our purpose. They show us that the climax of wickedness as it is in the earth when judgment will come, and Israel's time commences once more, will be connected with commerce, riches and luxuries. The ephah points to this.

In the second place let us notice that in the midst of the ephah there is seen a woman. She is called wickedness. The Hebrew word wickedness is translated by the Septuagint with "anomia". We find that the Holy Spirit uses the same word in 2 Thessalonians 2:8, and then shall be revealed in the wicked one (anomia) whom the Lord Jesus will slay with the Spirit of His mouth. The woman in the ephah personifies wickedness. She has surrounded herself with the ephah and sits in the midst of it. Have we not here the great whore having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication? Undoubtedly. This woman is the type of evil and wickedness in its highest form. Let us glance at that wonderful description of that woman in Revelation. She is the great whore sitting upon many waters. She sits upon a scarlet colored beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns. The woman is arrayed in purple and scarlet decked with gold, precious stones and pearls. Upon her forehead is seen her name, Mystery, Babylon the Great, the mother of harlots and abominations in the earth. She is drunk with the blood of the saints. The woman in the ephah represents the same great whore, Babylon the Great. This becomes at once clear when we take into consideration that the woman in the ephah is carried swiftly away and a house is built for her in the land of Shinar, and it shall be established, and set there upon her own base. Now the land of Shinar is Babylonia. But while in Revelation 17:1-18 the mystical Babylon is seen, in the eighteenth chapter there is another Babylon, the final great political-commercial world system; it is still future, not very far away, for we see that the trend of modern events is towards such a combination. The vision of the ephah and the woman evidently sealed up in it may denote the overthrow and judgment of the final Babylon.

Chapter 6

6:1-8. Vision of the four chariots

This vision presents the judgment of the nations preparatory to Messiah's reign. The findings of the scouts in vision one are now executed.

1. *The eighth vision (Zechariah 6:1-8)*

2. *The crowning of Joshua, the High-Priest (Zechariah 6:9-15)*

Verses 1-3. The vision presented

Verses 4-8. The vision explained

Zechariah 6:1-8. The last vision is the vision of the four chariots. We notice the similarity with the first night-vision. The visions opened with the hosts of heaven upon red, speckled, and white horses. It was a vision of judgment for the Gentiles and a vision of comfort to Israel. In this last vision the chariots of judgment are seen sweeping over the earth. It seems to denote judgment in its final accomplishment. The riders of the first vision may be termed the beginning of God's dealing with the nations, but the chariots put the divine judgment decrees into operation.

The riders halted in a valley amidst a myrtle grove, but the chariots rush forth to execute their terrible work from between two mountains of brass. These mountains mean undoubtedly Mount Moriah and the Mount of Olives. They rush through the Valley of Jehoshaphat. The brass is mentioned to denote the firmness and stability of these mountains, which shall never be moved. We do not think that in the four chariots there is an allusion to the four world-powers. The judgment of them is now come. The stone is falling and smiting the image at its feet and pulverizing it, putting it completely out of existence. The chariots are God's powers, agencies for judgment in the earth, which will pass swiftly along, shown by the fast running chariots. In Revelation 6:1-17 the seven seals are opened, and there go forth the four terrible riders upon white, red, black, and pale horses. The riders in the Apocalypse are the riders which go through the earth during the great tribulation, but in the eighth night vision of Zechariah we see the chariots of God's wrath. The vision falls in the time when the heaven opens and He appears riding upon a white horse, His name Faithful and True, coming in righteousness to judge and to make war. Wonderful vision of Him

who is clothed with a vesture dipped in blood! He is followed by the armies of heaven upon white horses, all clothed in fine linen white and clean. “And out of His mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it He should smite the nations, and He shall rule them with a rod of iron, and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of almighty God” Revelation 19:1-21.

The angel interprets to the prophet that the chariots are the four spirits of the heavens which go forth from standing before the Lord of the earth. These agencies for wrath were with God, standing before Him, the Lord of all the earth, but now at His command they descend to scatter death and destruction. They go forth in sets, and the north country and south country both so prominent in the prophetic word are mentioned. The bay horses, however, are not confined to one direction, they go through the entire earth. At last in the judgment of the land of the north the spirit is caused to rest. The overthrow of the enemies of Israel is complete and the spirit is quieted. How long may the wrath last and for how long may the chariots do their deadly work? Perhaps longer than we think. The millennial reign of Christ, as foreshadowed in the bloody rule of David, followed by the peaceful reign of Solomon, may teach us lessons in this direction. The night visions have ended. They may be termed the Apocalypse of Zechariah. Daniel, Zechariah, and Revelation go together in a wonderful harmony and explain each other. Alas! that just these three parts of the Bible should be so little studied and so little understood.

6:9-15. Crowning the high priest

Verses 9-11. The historical event and the prophetic symbolism

Verses 12-13, and 15. Messianic import of the prophetic symbolism

Verse 14. Provision for a permanent memorial

Zechariah 6:9-15. The memorable night with its great visions was gone. The first streaks of the morning heralded the coming dawn. Then the Word of the Lord came to the young prophet commanding him to make crowns of silver and gold and crown Joshua, the High-Priest.

Some consider this to be the ninth vision of the prophet. It is, however, the word of the Lord which comes to the prophet. There can be no doubt but the command was actually carried out and Cheldai (robust), Tobiah (God's goodness), and Jedaiah (God knows), gave their silver and gold, and crowns were made out of it and placed upon the head of Joshua the high-priest. But the action had a much deeper meaning. It was a highly typical one. It must have astonished Joshua and the people to hear such a command, for the royal crown

did not belong to the high-priest but to the descendant of David. He must have understood that the whole command had a symbolical bearing. Joshua hears it from the Word of the Lord that another person is only typified by him, "Behold the man whose name is the Branch." It is this man the Branch who will be a priest upon the throne. This, of course, is our Lord Jesus Christ. The name of the high-priest Joshua is in itself very significant, for the meaning is, God is salvation, Saviour, Jesus. Pontius Pilate was fulfilling prophecy when he stood there leading out Jesus of Nazareth before that tumultuous multitude, and when he said "Behold the man." If the assembled Jews had known the Scriptures they would have recognized the phrase. But how did He then come forth? He wore a crown of thorns upon His meek and loving brow, and the people gazed into the blood-stained face of the Lamb of God now ready to be placed upon the altar and slain. But once again it will sound forth, "Behold the man," for when He appears it will be after He has gathered His saints, and then He will come as the Son of Man in the heavens, and the sign of the Son of Man will be seen there. He will be crowned again, too, but not with the crown of suffering and shame, but with the crowns of glory. Thus He is seen in Revelation 19:12 as wearing many crowns.

He comes to build the temple of Jehovah, bearing majesty, sitting and ruling upon His throne. He is now the builder of the spiritual temple, which is composed of living stones Ephesians 2:21, 1 Peter 2:5. But when He comes again there will be the building of another temple. It is now no longer His Father's throne but His own, upon which He is a priest as well. The King of Kings and the Lord of Lords has now taken possession of His inheritance. The times of overturning are over and He whose right it is has come. There is a very instructive thought in the fact that the persons of the exile, as mentioned above, were to bring the silver and the gold out of which the crowns were to be made. The time will come when the whole exiled nation, so long scattered and peeled, though even in dispersion, the richest nation of the earth, will bring their silver and gold, their glory and their all and lay it at the feet of the King.





The Golden Gate, as it is called in Christian literature, is the oldest of the current gates in Jerusalem's Old City Walls. According to Jewish tradition, the Shekhinah (שכינה) (Divine Presence) used to appear through this gate, and will appear again when the Messiah comes and a new gate replaces the present one; that is why Jews used to pray for mercy at the former gate at this location. Hence the name Sha'ar Harachamim (הרחמים שער), the Gate of Mercy. In Christian apocryphal texts, the gate was the scene of a meeting between the parents of Mary, so that Joachim and Anne Meeting at the Golden Gate became a standard subject in cycles depicting the Life of the Virgin. It is also said that Jesus passed through this gate on Palm Sunday. In Arabic, it is known as the Gate of Eternal Life. In ancient times, the gate was known as the Beautiful Gate. First picture the cemetery at the Golden Gate.

II. QUESTIONS CONCERNING CERTAIN FASTS

Chapter 7

7. The question of the fasts

1. *The question (Zechariah 7:1-3)*
2. *The reproof (Zechariah 7:4-7)*
3. *The lessons of the past (Zechariah 7:8-14)*

Verses 1-3. The question raised

Zechariah 7:1-3. Nearly two years had passed since Zechariah's great visions, and during that time the people had been obedient to the vision and built the house. Soon the ancient worship was to be resumed. A question arose in the minds of the people concerning certain Jewish days of fasting. The principal day was the day set apart in memory of the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians. It was kept on the ninth day of the fifth month (the ninth of Ab, still kept by the Jews). The question came to the prophet through two men who bear foreign names--Sherezer (Prince of the Treasury) and Regemelech (the official of the king). The question was, "Should I weep in the fifth month, separating myself, as I have done these many years?" They had wept in Babylon on that day Psalms 137:1-9.

Verses 4-7. The motive of selfishness exposed

Zechariah 7:4-7. The word of the Lord comes now to the prophet. The message is for all the people and for the priests. The two fasts are mentioned. The one in the fifth month as already stated was the one in remembrance of the destruction of the city. The fast of the seventh month was kept on the anniversary of the murder of Gedaliah at Mizpah Jeremiah 41:1-18. But why did they keep these fast days? Why do they keep these days indeed still? The Lord asks, "Is it unto Me, unto Me?" No, it was not for the honor and glory of God, but their own selfish interests were at the bottom of it. Indeed God had never asked them to fast. These institutions were man-made, and highly displeasing to Jehovah. And is it not so now, not alone with the Jews but with Christendom? oh, the man-made institutions and outward observances which only dishonor God and are for the selfish interests of the people! The eating and drinking, the fast being over, was not unto the Lord, but unto themselves. It was obedience the Lord required. Had they listened to the words spoken by the prophets they would not have been in captivity, there would have been no need for a solemn fast. Unbelief was at the bottom of it all, and so it is still with the nation in dispersion.

Verses 8-14. Call to repentance proclaimed

Zechariah 7:8-14. Here are moral lessons and instructions. They were to execute true judgment, show mercy and compassion, oppress not the widow nor the fatherless, the poor or the stranger. These were His demands in the past, but their fathers did not listen, and as a result the judgment of the Lord came upon them and they were scattered with a whirlwind. History has repeated itself. What happened in the past happened again.

Chapter 8

8. When the fasts become joyful feasts

1. *The restoration announced* (Zechariah 8:1-3)
2. *The peace of Jerusalem* (Zechariah 8:4-5)
3. *The return to the land* (Zechariah 8:6-8)
4. *The blessing of the land and the people* (Zechariah 8:9-23)

Verses 1-8. Present partial restoration harbinger of an eventual full restoration of Israel.

Zechariah 8:1-3. The answer is now given to the question, and it is an answer which none of the petitioners expected. The answer is closely linked with the third night vision in chapter 2, for here is an enlarged prophecy concerning the restoration of Jerusalem. Jehovah was jealous for Jerusalem. The wrath fell upon the Gentiles and He poured out His fury upon them (which of course is future). When that has taken place He returns unto Zion and establishes His dwelling place in the midst of His people. Then Jerusalem is no longer trodden down by the Gentiles. Her name is a new name, “the City of Truth.” How different from the other names she bore in her humiliation! She was called an unclean woman Lamentations 1:8; Lamentations 1:17; a harlot and a murderer Isaiah 1:21; Sodom and Egypt Revelation 11:1-19.

Zechariah 8:4-5. The misery of Jerusalem was great while under judgment. All will be changed “in that day.” The city will have peace and prosperity and be largely inhabited. Hence there will be no more need to weep over her past fate and desolation, for greater glory has come.

Zechariah 8:6-8. They all return to the land. In the second chapter the north country was mentioned (Russia); and their return announced. Here the east and the west are named, the far east, India, China, Japan; and the West, the European countries and America.

Verses 9-17. Encouragement amid the hardships of the present partial restoration

Verses 18-23. Prediction of full millennial restoration

Zechariah 8:9-23. What a contrast with the former days of judgment and dispersion and misery! For before these days there was no hire for man, nor any hire for beast.... Little fruit was had from the ground; there was nothing for man and beast.... Neither was there any peace to him that went out or came in on account of the affliction.... There was no rest, no peace, but uncertainty and affliction. Those that went out from the land had no peace, and they that came into the land found no peace. The curse said, No rest for the sole of their feet, and how literally it has been fulfilled. Again the people seek a resting place in the land without their God and their Saviour, all in the confidence of the flesh. They will succeed in their restoration plans only to find themselves at last in greater difficulties and facing worse afflictions than ever before. Then every one will be against his neighbor (Zechariah 8:10). Money spent by the millions in building channels for irrigation, planting of trees and vines, building railroads, etc. (just what modern Zionism proposes and has undertaken to do), may succeed in transforming the land in spots into a fruitful garden, but the time of Jacob's trouble will sweep that all away. The Lord will be gracious to the very land in the day of His manifestation. There will be a time of peace, the vine will give her fruit, the ground her increase, the heavens their dew.

The curse will then be changed into a blessing and the remnant will be a holy people. Fast days become feast days; national calamities of the past are forgotten, and in the place of weeping there is praise and worship. The songs of praise with which the book of Psalms closes will undoubtedly then be sung by the restored nation. This great restoration chapter closes with a vision of the conversion of the whole world (Zechariah 8:20-23). The nations are seeking the Lord of Hosts in Jerusalem to pray before Him. Then the Jew will no longer be a dishonored person among the Gentiles, but they will be the messengers of the King among the nations; and they will gladly take hold of the skirt of the Jew to be taken by him to Jerusalem.

II. THE TWO PROPHETIC BURDENS--THE GREAT PROPHECIES OF THE FUTURE

Chapter 9

9:1-10:1. Human world ruler vs. divine prince of peace

I. The First Burden (9-11)

1. The burden of the land of Hadrach (Zechariah 9:1-8)

2. Zion's King of Peace (Zechariah 9:9-12)

3. *The near-event of the invasion by Antiochus Epihanes (Zechariah 9:13-17; Zechariah 10:1)*

9:1-8. Sudden rise of Alexander the Great

Zechariah 9:1-8. The final section of Zechariah is of still greater interest. The Deliverer, King Messiah, is revealed in this section as suffering, rejected, pierced, slain. The great finale leads us up to the great conflict and final siege of Jerusalem. We do not enter into the inventions of criticism, which claim that these great prophecies are less authentic than the first part of Zechariah.

The land of Hadrach against which the first burden in chapter 9 commences cannot be correctly located. Its closer connection with Damascus and Hamath shows that the land of Hadrach must have been a province of the Syrian kingdom then in existence. The Phoenician Cities Tyre and Sidon are next, and then mention is made of four Philistine cities. Against these, Syria, Phoenicia and the cities of the Philistines a great calamity and overthrow is prophesied by Zechariah. They are conquered by the hosts of an enemy, and the rich treasures of Tyre are heaped together in the streets--silver as the dust and gold as the mire--the bulwarks are smitten, and she herself consumed by fire. From there the conquest goes on rapidly to the Philistinian cities, and the King of Gaza perishes. The question arises, What conquest and calamity is this? Is it accomplished or is it still future? History records one great conqueror who rapidly overthrew the countries and cities mentioned in this burden. Alexander the Great and his expedition so successfully carried on is undoubtedly meant here. All students of the prophetic Scriptures know how prominently he likewise stands out in the book of Daniel. The young monarch, after the battle of Issus, besieged and quickly captured Damascus. Sidon was easily taken, but Tyre resisted him some seven months and was burned to the ground. Gaza and the other cities came next. Thus the burden of the word of Jehovah as uttered here by Zechariah was literally fulfilled in the Syrian conquest of Alexander the Great. However, history tells us that the armies of the youthful monarch passed by Jerusalem a number of times without doing harm to the city. This is remarkable, and in accord with the prophecy of Zechariah, for we read in the eighth verse, "And I will encamp against mine house, against the army, against him that passes through and returns, and no oppressor shall come over them any more, for now I have seen it with mine eyes."

But this prophetic burden leads us up also to the final days, for we read here the promise that "no oppressor shall come over them any more." This brings it in connection with the final coming deliverance of Israel, and the final destructive visitation upon their enemies.

9:9. First advent of Israel's humble king and saviour

Zechariah 9:9-12. A great prophecy follows. The true King of Israel comes here before us in His humiliation, and coming exaltation.

Rejoice greatly, daughter of Zion, Shout aloud, daughter of Jerusalem; Behold thy king cometh to thee, Just and having salvation; Meek and riding upon an ass, Even upon a colt, the she-ass's foal; And I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, And the horse from Jerusalem, And the battle bow shall be cut off, And He shall speak peace unto the nations, And His dominion shall be from sea to sea, And from the river to the ends of the earth. As for thee also, for the sake of thy covenant blood, I send forth thy prisoners from the waterless pit, Return to the stronghold--Prisoners of hope Even today I declare I will render double unto thee.

This stands in contrast to the Grecian conqueror, and it needs no proofs that the coming King whom Zechariah beholds is the King Messiah. The Jews acknowledge it as such. One of the greatest Jewish commentators (Rashi) says: It is impossible to interpret it of any other than King Messiah. An interesting fable is based upon this prophecy, and well known among orthodox Jews. Rabbi Eliezer says, commenting on the words lowly and riding upon an ass, "This is the ass, the foal of that she-ass which was created in the twilight. This is the ass which Abraham our father saddled for the binding Of Isaac his son. This is the ass upon which Moses our teacher rode when He came to Egypt, as it is said, And he made them ride upon the ass Exodus 4:20. This is the ass upon which the Son of David shall ride." Other interesting quotations could be given from Jewish writings, but this is sufficient to show that the Jews believe it to be a Messianic prophecy. And what blindness that they do not see Him who is the Messiah; but is not the so-called "higher criticism" existing today in Christendom being taught in churches and schools, and that there are no Messianic prophecies in the Old Testament, much greater blindness? Alas! so it is, and the outcome can be nothing else in the end than the denial of the divinity of our Lord, or Unitarianism.

Every reader of the New Testament knows that this prophecy is quoted in the Gospels. In the Gospel of Matthew we read (Matthew 21:5) : "All this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, Tell the daughter of Sion, Behold thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, upon a colt the foal of an ass." The context shows a great multitude crying, Hosanna to the Son of David: Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest. But soon the cry is changed unto, This is Jesus the prophet from Nazareth of Galilee. Notice the Holy Spirit quoting from

Zechariah leaves out the sentence, “He is just, having salvation.” This is not an error, but it is the divine right of the Spirit who gave the prophecies in olden times to apply them correctly in the New Testament. In the Gospel of Mark in the eleventh chapter there is likewise the description of Christ’s entry into Jerusalem, but Zechariah is not quoted. The same is true of the account given by Luke, chapter 19, and here He is mentioned as the King that cometh in the name of Jehovah, peace in heaven, and glory in the highest. In the fourth Gospel, John 12:15, the account of His coming to Jerusalem is much shorter than in the other Gospels. It says there, “Fear not, daughter of Zion; behold, thy King cometh, sitting upon an ass’s colt.” We see from this that the four Gospels give each an account of the entry of the Lord into Jerusalem; two of them quote from Zechariah and the other two do not. The quotations themselves are different from the prophecy in Zechariah 9:1-17 in two respects. The first words, Rejoice greatly, are not at all used. In Matthew it is, Tell the daughter of Zion, and in John, Fear not, daughter of Zion. The sentence, “He is just and having salvation”, is left out in both.

A superficial exposition of the Word claims that Zechariah’s prophecy was fulfilled in the event recorded by the Gospels. As far as His entry into Jerusalem is concerned, riding upon the colt the foal of an ass (and note in Matthew it is shown that both the colt and the ass are brought to Him. He could ride, of course, only upon one, but the she-ass had to go along in fulfillment of prophecy), and the way He came, meekly, in this respect the prophecy was fulfilled. This entry of the Son of Man into Jerusalem was His formal presentation to Jerusalem as its King, but, as stated above, the Messianic cry of welcome, Blessed is He, soon changed into, Jesus the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee, and that again in the final cry of rejection, Crucify Him, crucify Him! There was no salvation for Israel then, and no kingdom for Him, hence no rejoicing is mentioned in the quotations.

It is His second coming to Jerusalem as the Son of Man in His glory which will bring the fulfillment of Zechariah 9:9-11. True, the colt, the she ass’s foal, will not be the animal He rides, but He will come upon a white horse followed by the armies of heaven. He comes then truly for Jerusalem, fulfilling the prophecy, “Just is He having salvation” (marginal reading, victory). There will be again the welcome cry of the one hundred eighteenth Psalm, “Blessed is He that cometh in the name of Jehovah,” preceded by the plea, “Hosanna, save now.”

The tenth and eleventh verses (Zechariah 9:10-11) show clearly that the prophecy is yet to be fulfilled and can be only fulfilled in the coming of the Son of Man in His glory. One of the reasons why modern Judaism rejects Jesus of Nazareth, and does not believe Him to be the promised Redeemer, is in this

prophecy. Rabbi F. De Sola Mendes, of New York, brings in a little book, "A Hebrew's Reply to the Missionaries," the following argument: "We reject Jesus of Nazareth as our Messiah on account of His deeds. He says of Himself, 'Think not that I am come to send peace on the earth; I came not to send peace but a sword,' etc. But we find that our prophets ascribed to the true Messiah quite different actions. Zechariah says (Zechariah 9:10), He shall speak peace to the nations. Jesus says He came to send the sword on the earth; whereas, Isaiah says of the true Messianic time, 'They shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation; neither shall they learn war any more.'"

Of course the Jew is right in expecting the literal fulfillment of this prophecy, and it will be fulfilled when He comes again and the restoration of all things will follow, as spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets.

When He appears again, in like manner as He went into heaven, that is not for His saints but with His saints, there will be peace for Ephraim and for Jerusalem, and the kingdom is then restored to Israel, that is, to the house of Judah and the house of Israel. The chariot, the horse, and the battle-bow will be cut off. Not alone will He bring peace to the covenant people but to the nations. He will speak peace. "And He shall stand, and shall feed His flock in the strength of the LORD, in the majesty of the name of Jehovah His God, and they shall abide; for now shall He be great unto the ends of the earth. And this man shall be our peace" Micah 5:4-15. There will be abundance of peace Psalms 72:7. His dominion will be from sea to sea and to the ends of the earth.

The prisoners of hope to be released, by the blood of the covenant, from the pit wherein there is no water, is the nation whose captivity is now ended. How strange that people should take a passage like this and interpret it as meaning the restitution of the wicked and the ungodly from the pit. There is nothing taught in the Word like that which some people term a larger hope. The restitution (restoration) of all things is not left to the fanciful interpretation of the human mind, but is clearly defined by the Word itself, as spoken by the prophets. In the vision of the dry bones in Ezekiel 37:1-28, Israel's complaint is, Our hope is lost. But when He is manifested, who is indeed the Hope of Israel, the prisoners (the captives), will be released and cleansed. "Refrain thy voice from weeping and thine eyes from tears.... there is hope for thy latter end, saith the LORD, and thy children shall come again to their own border" Jeremiah 31:17. The exhortation to return to the stronghold follows. Israel will then sing, "He brought me up out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and He set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings" Psalms 40:2. Double will be rendered unto them, as promised, "Speak to the heart of Jerusalem, and cry unto her that her

warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned, that she has received of the LORD'S hand double for all her sins" Isaiah 40:22. "For your shame ye shall have double, and for confusion they shall rejoice in that portion; therefore in their land they shall possess double; everlasting joy shall be unto them" Isaiah 41:7.

9:10-10:1. Second advent of Israel's glorious king

Zechariah 9:13-17; Zechariah 10:1. The scene changes once more. One of Alexander's successors, Antiochus Epiphanes, and the Maccabean victory is the topic of these verses. On this invader see Daniel 8:1-27, where he is predicted as the little horn and his abominable work there is fully described. He entered "the pleasant land," the land of Israel. A bitter struggle commenced, for Antiochus tried to exterminate the Jews, and their religion as well. Every observance of the Jewish religion was forbidden, the Sabbath had to be profaned, and unclean food had to be eaten. Idols were set up in the temple. Instead of the Jewish feasts, the feasts of idols, with all their shocking abominations and immoralities, were introduced, and the Jews were forced to join in them. Thousands suffered martyrdom. But all at once a few people stood up against the abominations, the Maccabeans, and in a struggle lasting about twenty-five years, they fought successfully against the enemies.

This terrible visitation of the land and the wonderful victory of the Maccabeans are foretold by the prophet in the closing verses of the ninth chapter. We will quote the passage:

I bend for me Judah and fill the bow with Ephraim, And I will stir up thy sons, Zion, against thy sons, Greece, And make thee like the sword of a mighty man. Jehovah shall be seen over them, And His arrow shall go forth like lightning-- And the Lord Jehovah shall blow the trumpet. He shall go with whirlwinds of the South. The LORD of Hosts shall cover them; They shall devour and tread down slingstones, And they drink and make a noise as from wine, And they shall be filled like bowls, as the corners of the altar. And Jehovah their God saves them in that day, as the flock of His people; For jewels of a crown shall they be, glittering over His land, For how great is His goodness and how great His beauty! Corn shall make the young men flourish, and new wine maidens.

But again we have to remark that this prophecy is only partially fulfilled. The terrible tribulation of the land of Judah when Antiochus Epiphanes invaded the land is but a type of the great tribulation, the time of Jacob's trouble. The remnant of Israel will then be victorious. Thus everything is seen in this chapter

in a past fulfillment, but only partial, and in it a future fulfillment, which will be complete.

We cannot leave this chapter without calling attention to the blessed statement:

For jewels of a crown they shall be, glittering over His land.

The slain who suffered martyrdom are meant, and all those who fought for Jehovah's name and honor. May not the statement in Hebrews 11:1-40 refer to this time? "Others had trials of mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, they were tempted, they were slain with the sword; they went about in sheepskins, in goatskins: being destitute, afflicted, evil entreated, of whom the world was not worthy, wandering in deserts and in mountains and caves and the holes of the earth" Hebrews 11:36-40.

And all will find a repetition during the coming tribulation. But the time for reward has not yet come. The throne of glory is not yet revealed, and the jewels, the saints made up in a crown, glittering over the land, are not yet seen. But the assurance is given, "They shall be Mine, saith the LORD of Hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels" Malachi 3:17.

The first verse of the next chapter is misplaced; it belongs to the close of chapter 9. When the time of blessing comes, the latter rain will fall upon the land and produce the promised fruitfulness.

Chapter 10:1-12

10:2-12. Divine prince of peace and deliverer

- 1. The apostasy of Israel in the last days (Zechariah 10:2-4)*
- 2. The victory over the enemies (Zechariah 10:5-7)*
- 3. Deliverance and restoration (Zechariah 10:8-12)*

Verses 2-4. The second advent and the cure of the nation's deception

Zechariah 10:1-4. Idolatry was the great sin of both Judah and Israel. They practiced the occult things of heathendom and worshipped their false gods; they had teraphim used for divination. On account of this the wrath fell upon the former generations, and the Lord's anger was kindled against their leaders, the shepherds, and they were dispersed. We have called attention before to Matthew

12:43-45, the passage in which the Lord Jesus announces that the unbelieving part of the nation will return in the last days to the unclean spirit of idolatry, only in a worse form than before. Many of the unbelievers amongst the Jews in our days turn to the witchery of Christian Science; they adopt also that Satanic system known as Spiritism. But the apostates will go beyond that. They will finally accept the Devil's master production, the man of sin, and worship him 2 Thessalonians 2:1-17; Revelation 13:1-18; Daniel 9:27. Then the Lord will punish these goats. At the same time there is a remnant which will stand aside from these future idolatries; they will fear the Lord and not enter into a covenant with the beast (see annotations Daniel 9:27. The second half of the third verse in this chapter belongs to this remnant: "The LORD of hosts visits His flock, the house of Judah, and makes it like His state-horse in the war." He will use them and finally deliver them.

The fourth verse (Zechariah 10:4) is of much interest. "From him will be the cornerstone, from him the nail, from him the battle-bow, from him every ruler goeth forth at once" (corrected translation). The nail in the oriental house is a large pin, often very beautifully ornamented, and the most costly things are hanged thereupon. "And I will fasten him as a nail in a sure place and he shall be for a glorious throne to his father's house. And they shall hang upon him all the glory of his father's house" Isaiah 22:23-25. The Shemoth rabbah, a Jewish interpretation, says on this verse, "this is King David; as it is said, the stone which the builders rejected is become the chief cornerstone." Some say it is spoken concerning the Lord, that He is the cornerstone and the nail. It refers to Him, no doubt, but what is spoken of Him finds also a fulfillment in restored Israel. Thus Israel is yet to be the cornerstone upon which everything rests in the earth, and the nail upon which hangs the glory.

Verses 5-12. The second advent and the nation's triumph over its foes

Zechariah 10:5-7. The great final victory is announced in this section. They shall fight and conquer, for the LORD of hosts is with them as of old. They will be saved out of the time of Jacob's trouble, "For I have mercy upon them; and they shall be as though I had not cast them off; for I am the LORD their God, and I will hear them." Ephraim will be there, the restored ten tribes.

Zechariah 10:8-12. They will be delivered in that day, redeemed and restored. Let us notice that the eleventh verse (Zechariah 10:11) must be applied to the Lord. He is with them in the sea of affliction, as He was with them in Egypt and went before them in the pillar of cloud.

Chapter 11

11. Israel's rejection of the good shepherd

1. *The judgment of the land, the temple and the slaughter of the flock* (Zechariah 11:1-6)
2. *The true shepherd set aside and rejected* (Zechariah 11:7-14)
3. *The foolish shepherd* (Zechariah 11:15-17)

Verses 1-3. Impending devastation of the land

Verses 4-14. Prediction of the rejection of the good shepherd

Zechariah 11:1-6. This chapter presents a dark prophetic picture. We have seen in the preceding chapters the blessings and mercies in store for the Israel of the future. The visions and prophecies have revealed their national and spiritual restoration, the overthrow of their enemies, the destruction of the world-powers, the establishment of the theocracy and the blessings of the kingdom. What precedes this coming glory is now more fully unfolded, and the rejection of the Shepherd of Israel is predicted. The first six verses concern the judgment as the result of that rejection. For a complete exposition see our "Studies in Zechariah," where we also give the interesting Jewish comments on this passage. They apply it mostly to the destruction of the temple.

The correct interpretation is that it includes all the devastation of the land, the burning of the temple, the slaughter of the flock, the spoiling of the shepherds, the Jewish leaders and the complete overthrow of the land and of the people. How awful the fulfillment of the prophecy has been! The Lord's voice, full of tears cried, long after Zechariah's mournful vision, "If thou hadst known, at least in this thy day, the things which belong to thy peace, but now they are hid from thine eyes! For the days shall come upon thee that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side. And shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee, and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another." The measure was full. After terrible wars amongst themselves, the fire advanced in the direction of Lebanon, in the form of the Roman army full of vengeance, spreading ruin and misery wherever they went, till after a long and dreadful siege Jerusalem fell, the temple was burnt, and over a million human beings were slain. Not one stone was left upon another. Up to now this judgment has been the most appalling, the tribulation then the greatest; but there is another tribulation coming of which the former destruction of Jerusalem is but a faint type, and that tribulation which is even

now so close at hand will find a climax in the day of wrath, the day of vengeance of our God. The next Zechariah 11:1-17 :(4-6) speak of the flock of slaughter and the last attempt divine love made to save the doomed nation.

Zechariah 11:7-14. The prophet acts again symbolically in taking two staves, one called Beauty, the other Bands. Much has been written on this interesting but difficult passage. The first sentence speaks of divine love. The true Shepherd came, the Messiah, and He fed the flock of slaughter, the poor of the flock. He looked on the multitudes and was moved with compassion, for they were scattered, like sheep without a shepherd. The prophet as representing the true Shepherd has two staves. The one is named Beauty; or, as we read in the margin, graciousness. The second one is named Bands. The Shepherd carries a staff to protect and to guide His flock. God's mercy and favor are clearly indicated in these two staves. The first one, Beauty, which is cut asunder first, and that before the wages of the Shepherd, the thirty pieces of silver, are given, stands no doubt for the gracious offer with which the King, preaching the kingdom, came among His people, to His own. He proclaimed that which prophets had spoken before, God's mercy and love, long promised, now to be carried out. He Himself had come to redeem His people and deliver them from their mighty enemies as well as from the false leaders. But the offer, the kingdom preaching, is rejected, the staff, Beauty, is cut asunder, the covenant with the peoples (Amim in Hebrew), His own, is now broken. The kingdom is to be taken away and given to another nation. After the breaking of the staff, Beauty, there comes the giving of the wages, the thirty pieces of silver. The Shepherd who broke the staff is treated like a slave.

The second staff in His hands, Bands, speaks of union, binding together, bringing into fellowship. It typifies the priestly side of the good Shepherd who died for the flock. This staff is broken after the thirty pieces of silver were given for Him, and cast into the temple. They cried, Away with Him! we have no King save Caesar! Crucify Him! His blood be upon us and upon our children! The cross bears the superscription, This is Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews, and from the lips of the rejected King and Shepherd there came the prayer for His people, Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do. The doom came not at once upon the nation. Once more the love of the Shepherd is preached to the miserable sheep, and the remission of sins offered in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, but it ends in rejection too; no bringing together into One followed. The foolish shepherd appears next, and after him the good Shepherd will appear again with His two staves, Beauty and Bands, kingdom and mercy, bringing and binding together. He will then be a Priest upon His throne. This interpretation is the most satisfactory one, and in harmony with the entire scope of Zechariah's visions and prophecies.

Who are the three shepherds to be cut off in one month by the Shepherd? The three shepherds are not persons, but they stand for the three classes of rulers which governed Israel, and were in that sense shepherds. We read of these shepherds in Jeremiah 2:88, priests, rulers and prophets. The Lord likewise mentions them in Matthew 16:21, elders, chief priests and scribes. When He came He was indeed weary with them, and denounced their hypocrisies and wickedness. They in turn hated and abhorred Him, and conspired to put Him to death. The Lord Himself cut them off. He pronounced His woes and judgments upon them, but the judgment was not at once carried out. When Jerusalem was taken, their rule came to an end and they were cut off.

But there are mentioned the wretched of the flock that gave heed unto the Shepherd, and they knew that it was the word of Jehovah. These wretched ones are the faithful ones who followed the Shepherd, the small remnant (compare with Zechariah 13:7). The others who rejected the King and the Shepherd were indeed not fed, but were dying and cut off.

The wages of the good Shepherd, thirty pieces of silver, and these thrown into the house of Jehovah to the potter is to be considered next. Thirty pieces of silver was the price of a slave who had been killed. If the ox gore a manservant or a maidservant, the owner shall give unto their master thirty shekels of silver Exodus 21:32. Oh, what unfathomable love! The Lord from heaven became like a slave. The love He looked for He found not. It was refused to Him, and instead He was insulted, mocked, and treated like a miserable slave. There was one of the twelve who was called Judas Iscariot. He went to the chief priests and said, What are you willing to give me, and I will deliver Him unto you? And they weighed unto him thirty pieces of silver Matthew 26:15. The money at the command of Jehovah is thrown away by the prophet with indignation into the house of Jehovah, to the potter. Perhaps the prophet never knew the real significance of his act, but we know it from the New Testament. "Then Judas which betrayed Him, when he saw that He was condemned, repented himself and brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, saying, I have sinned in that I betrayed innocent blood. But they said, What is this to us? See thou to it. And he cast down the pieces of silver into the sanctuary, and departed and hanged himself. And the chief priests took the pieces of silver and said, it is not lawful to put them into the treasury since it is the price of blood. And they took counsel and bought with them the potters' field to bury strangers in. Wherefore that field was called the field of blood unto this day. Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremiah, the prophet, saying, And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of Him that was priced, whom certain of the children of Israel did price, and they gave them for the potters' field, as the Lord appointed me" Matthew 27:3-66. How striking the

fulfillment. However, here is a difficulty. In Matthew it is stated that Jeremiah spoke the prophecy, and Zechariah's name is not mentioned at all. How can this be explained?

The prophecy certainly as it was fulfilled was not given by Jeremiah at all, but through Zechariah. There can be no doubt that his name should appear here instead of Jeremiah, but that Jeremiah's name is quoted must have a meaning. Let us notice that it does not say in Matthew 27:1-66 that it was written by Jeremiah, but it is stated that it was spoken by Jeremiah. Is there anything in Jeremiah which can be linked with this prophecy? We have indeed in Jeremiah a similar action of the prophet, corresponding to Zechariah 11:13, and which is seen fulfilled in the gospel. Read Jeremiah 18:1-23; Jeremiah 19:1-15. The word "Tophet" used there means an unclean place, a burial ground. Jeremiah's name appears in Matthew's Gospel, to call attention to the fact that Jeremiah also spoke of the same event, the rejection of the true Shepherd.

Verses 15-17. Prediction of the acceptance of the bad shepherd

Zechariah 11:15-17. The foolish shepherd is the false Messiah, the man of sin, the son of perdition. The prophet impersonates him likewise. He no longer holds the staves of Beauty and Bands, but has the instrument of the foolish shepherd to wound and to hurt. This false Christ is the opposite from the true Christ. The true Shepherd came to seek, to save, to feed, to heal, and to gather; the false shepherd does the opposite.

The True One rejected, the nation becomes the prey of the foolish shepherds. Poor, blinded Israel! How many wicked shepherds they have had, and how often the prey of wicked leaders. False Messiahs appeared among them again and again to find strong and numerous following. Still the foolish shepherd, the last one, the very embodiment of Satan himself, the accuser, has not yet come. Forerunners there have been many. Herod was one of them, but not that man of sin, the son of perdition who will appear and be worshipped as a God, right before the King of Kings and the true Shepherd of His flock appears to slay that wicked one with the breath of His mouth and the brightness of His coming 2 Thessalonians 2:1-17. The Lord said, I am come in My Father's name, and ye receive Me not; if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive John 5:43. That one who comes in his own name has not yet come, and when at last he is here, it will be for Israel the time of greatest trouble and tribulation for all them that inhabit the earth. During the war interpretation of prophecy went to seed with some who saw in the deluded German Kaiser a fulfillment of this passage, because he had a withered arm. Such foolish inventions are deplorable, for they bring the study of prophecy into disrepute. The third section of our

chapter finds its complete fulfillment in the Antichrist, the false Messiah, the beast, the little horn, the leader of the enemy, the false prince of Israel; thus the foolish shepherd is called throughout the prophetic word. The dreadful punishment will be executed upon the foolish shepherd in the day of the Lord's coming with His saints for the salvation of his people Israel.

The eleventh chapter in Zechariah is the darkest in Israel's history. The night began with their apostasy and rejection of the Lord of Glory, their own brother, their loving Shepherd, the Lord Jesus Christ. It ends in darkness greater still under the regime of the foolish shepherd. But the morning cometh after that dark night, and Israel's sun will never set again.

II. The Second Burden of Zechariah (12-14)

Chapter 12

12. Israel's deliverance and national conversion

1. Jerusalem's conflict and victory (Zechariah 12:1-9)

2. The vision of the pierced One and its results (Zechariah 12:10-14)

Verses 1-9. Future siege of Jerusalem

Zechariah 12:1-9. The second burden begins with this chapter. It is wholly unfulfilled with the exception of the prophecy at the end of chapter 13 concerning the Shepherd who was smitten. The great future events recorded in these closing chapters of Zechariah are the following: The victory of Jerusalem, the overthrow of the hostile nations from the west (the nations which constitute the revived Roman Empire), the outpouring of the Spirit upon the remnant, the appearing and the vision of the Pierced One, the national repentance, the cleansing of the people, the invasion from the north, the appearing of Christ standing upon the Mount of Olives, the establishment of the kingdom and the glory of Jerusalem. Historically no such gathering of all nations against Jerusalem can be located. It is all prophetic, and so intensely interesting in the days we write, for these things are "about to come to pass."

Behold, I make Jerusalem a cup of reeling To all the nations round about: Upon Judah also shall it be, In the siege against Jerusalem. And it shall come in that day, I make Jerusalem A burdensome stone for all the peoples; All that are burdened with it shall be wounded; All the nations of the earth shall gather against it.

This does not take place till the end of the age is reached, the end which begins after the true Church is taken to glory. Then the nations satanically blinded will form the confederacy which in prophecy is the reconstruction of the Roman Empire, seen in the second chapter of Daniel under the symbol of the two feet and ten toes, and in Daniel 7:1-28 under the symbol of the ten horns with the little horn. In Revelation 13:1-18 it is the beast with the ten horns. The Jews will have to return first, at least a goodly number of them, and repossess the city.

In 1899 the author wrote as follows: "An exodus of Jews will take place, the land will become theirs, and the well laid plans and schemes of the present time will be carried out. Political combinations will be their chief hopes for success." This anticipated return is now a historic fact as one of the chief results of the great war (WWI). When finally the Jews think that they have reached the goal of their fleshly, unbelieving hopes, their greatest trouble begins. There is yet to appear the beast who makes a covenant with them. But according to Daniel's great prophecy Daniel 9:1-27 the covenant will be broken in the middle of the seventieth week. Then the beast heads the armies of the nations to come up against the land and against Jerusalem (see Revelation 19:19). They will lay siege to the city, but the Lord announces that these nations shall be cut to pieces. It is the time when the stone strikes the feet of the prophetic image in the second chapter of Daniel, the great battle of Armageddon. Zechariah 12:4-9 describe that day. Jehovah will smite these nations and all these hostile forces will be overthrown.

Here also is given the order of how the Lord will save the remnant of His people. Those who live in tents outside the city will be saved first; Jerusalem comes next. The purpose is that the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem may not exalt themselves over the rest of Judah. The house of David in this vision is mentioned five times. We have the glory of the house of David in verse seven, the strength of David and the supremacy of it in verse eight. The spirit of grace and supplication is given to the house of David, and the family of the house of David will mourn. Jews have a tradition which states that the last descendant of the house of David died in Spain centuries ago. There are no genealogies at present to prove that the kingly house of David is extinct or not, but the prophecies like the one we have in consideration, and many others which speak of the prominence of David and the house of David in the day when Jehovah will be manifested, make it very clear that among the wandering sons of Israel there are yet lineal descendants of the house of David. If they do not know it themselves, Jehovah knows it, and they will know it through Him. The feeble ones, literally the stumblers, among His people in that day of manifestation will be like David. What a hero David was! A man of war and strength conquering always and never conquered. And now the stumbler in Israel, the weakest one,

will have strength and courage like David. And David shall be as God, as the angel of Jehovah before them.

Verses 10-14. Vision of the crucified Messiah and the result

Zechariah 12:10-14. This is another great Messianic prophecy mentioned in the New Testament. In John 19:37 it is written, after the blessed side of our Lord had been pierced, "And again another Scripture saith, They shall look on Him whom they pierced." It is significant that the Holy Spirit speaking in the preceding verse, "that the Scripture be fulfilled," avoids this well known phrase in the verse we quoted and does not say that the looking on Him has been fulfilled. It was not then fulfilled, nor is it fulfilled during the age of Gospel preaching, but its fulfillment comes in the day which is prophetically described in the verses before us. Matthew 24:30 and Revelation 1:7 refer also to this portion of our chapter.

We do not follow the rationalistic reasonings of the school of criticism on this passage, nor do we mention the many question marks which these modern infidels have put over against this great prophecy. One of the mildest critics, Canon Driver, says: "The passage is, however, one of those which our ignorance of the circumstances of the time makes it impossible to interpret as a whole satisfactorily or completely. As the text stands the speaker must be, of course, Yahweh, and it is, no doubt, true that the Jews had pierced Him metaphorically by their rebellion and ingratitude throughout their history.... 'They pierced Him literally as the crowning act of their contumacy, in the Person of His Son on the cross' (T.T. Perowne; quoted by Driver), but these considerations do not explain the passage here." The New Testament quotations as given above are to any believer sufficient evidence that the Lord Jesus Christ is meant, and therefore explain the passage fully.

What a day it will be when the Spirit of grace and supplication comes upon the remnant of His people, when He appears in the clouds of heaven, when they shall see Him and know Him by the pierced side. The great vision of Saul on the road to Damascus will then be repeated; the young Pharisee saw Him as one "born out of due season." He was in his experience the earnest that the remnant of the nation to which Paul belonged would some day pass through the same experience. (See Studies in Zechariah, pp. 120-125.) A great mourning follows. It will be like the mourning in Hadad-rimmon in the valley of Megiddon 2 Chronicles 35:22-27; 2 Chronicles 35:1-27 :2 Kings 23:29. What a day of repentance it will be when this takes place.

Chapter 13

13. Israel's national cleansing

1. *The cleansing* (Zechariah 13:1)
2. *The blessed results of the cleansing* (Zechariah 13:2-6)
3. *The smitten Shepherd* (Zechariah 13:7)
4. *Salvation and condemnation* (Zechariah 13:8-9)

Verses 1-6. Prophecy of Israel's national cleansing

Zechariah 13:1. This verse is misplaced; it belongs to the preceding chapter. It is a prophecy of the cleansing of the repenting portion of God's earthly people. The fountain of cleansing, so beautifully expressed by Cowper:

There is a fountain filled with blood, Drawn from Immanuel's veins, And sinners plunged beneath that flood, Lose all their guilty stains--

was in existence through all the centuries of Israel's long dispersion. But the nation in blindness did not believe. Now all is changed. Their guilt is pardoned; all unrighteousness and iniquity is taken away. The Redeemer has come and turned away ungodliness from Jacob Romans 11:26-36. The prophetic Word is filled with promises concerning this future cleansing of the remnant of the nation Psalms 103:1-22; Isaiah 33:24; Ezekiel 39:29; Isaiah 59:20-21; Isaiah 45:19.

Zechariah 13:2-6. The cleansing is followed by the cutting off of the names of the idols, so that they will no longer be remembered. The false prophets and the unclean spirits, which had control during the great tribulation will be cast out and forever pass away. We have seen before in the 10th chapter that Israel will return to idolatry in the last days. The unclean spirit of idolatry which was cast out will at last return with seven others and will find the house empty, swept, and garnished. And the evil spirit, with the seven others more evil than himself, will enter in and dwell there, so that the last state of Israel becometh worse than the first. This will happen to this evil generation. This section of the 13th chapter makes it very clear that when the fountain is opened against sin and uncleanness, that idols will have been in the land, and false prophets prophesy there immediately before the manifestation of the Lord from heaven; for how could the names of the idols be cut off from the land if there were none there? Palestine may well be put down now as the great centre of false worship. Greek

and Latin crosses are seen on all sides in Jerusalem and other places, while saints, holy houses, and places are worshipped and adored.

On the spot where the LORD'S house stood, there stands today the mosque of the false prophet. All is idolatry. Of course when the Lord returns these false temples will be destroyed, and the Greek and Latin idolatries, as well as Islam, will forever pass out of existence. There will be a purging of the land from these abominations. This may be included in the prophecy here. Still, it is the people of Israel who are especially concerned in the prophecy before us. The land has often been the scene of idol worship, and the people engaged in that which Jehovah despises. It will be so again, only in a much worse form, when false prophets who are inspired by the unclean spirit and demons themselves will be their guides.

We must look to Revelation for a key. It is well known to all students of the prophetic word that all which comes after the third chapter in the last book of the Bible is future still. We are yet in the things which are present. When the Lord has taken the Church to Himself then the great visions, tribulations, wrath, and judgment will be fulfilled. Aside from the scenes in heaven we learn from Revelation the events in the earth during the great tribulation which ends with the wrath from heaven. Now in the 9th chapter and the 20th verse of Revelation .(Revelation 9:20) we read, And the rest of mankind which were not killed with these plagues repented not of the works of their hands that they should not worship demons and the idols of gold, and of silver, and of brass, and of stone, and of wood, which can neither see nor hear nor walk.

Who is the person mentioned in verse six (Zechariah 13:6)? In Studies in Zechariah we speak of this man as representing the counterfeit Christ, imitating the true Christ. But after more careful consideration we have come to the conclusion that this view is untenable. It is Christ Himself. He is here contrasted with the false prophets. It is the Pierced One. After they look upon Him they will inquire about those wounds in His hands and He will answer them, revealing the story of His rejection. This leads to the prophecy in the next verse.

Verse 7. Provision for Israel's national conversion

Zechariah 13:7. This certainly is Christ, whose rejection, more than His rejection by His own, is here revealed. It is the same as in Isaiah 53:1-12, the suffering One, who is a man, and called My Fellow, the fellow of Jehovah of Hosts, Jehovah Himself, who speaks here, and what does He speak? The sword is to work against His Shepherd and against His own Fellow. The blessed mystery of the atonement is thus brought out. Indeed it is the heart of the Gospel

here. “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish but have life eternal.” The Lord laid on Him the iniquity of us all. It speaks of Him, the forsaken One, the Son of God, forsaken in the hour of His agony, the sword upon Him and against Him. In the New Testament we find the passage quoted in the Gospel of Matthew 26th chapter and 31st verse (Matthew 26:31): “Then saith Jesus unto them, all ye shall be offended because of Me this night; for it is written, I will smite the Shepherd and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad.”

Verses 7-9. Prelude to Israel’s national conversion

Verse 9. The appropriation of the provision for cleansing

Zechariah 13:8-9. There is a very misleading idea among many students of prophecy as if the statement of Romans 1:26, “all Israel shall be saved,” meant that all the Jews will receive the blessing and the glory on that coming day of salvation. Some of the evil systems, like the Russell cult (International Bible Student Association), go so far as to teach that there will be a resurrection of all the ungodly Jews of past generations for a second chance. This passage silences these unscriptural theories. The promise of restoration and glory belongs to the godly, the believing and repenting remnant. The mass of Jews, who call themselves “Reform Jews,” who in reality are infidels, because they deny the Word of God and have completely discarded the faith in a coming Messiah, will be cut off. The third part (the remnant) only will be saved.

Chapter 14

14. Messiah’s second advent in glory

- 1. The last conflict and the manifestation of the Lord (Zechariah 14:1-5)*
- 2. The complete salvation (Zechariah 14:6-11)*
- 3. The punishment of the enemies (Zechariah 14:12-15)*
- 4. The conversion of the world (Zechariah 14:16-19)*
- 5. The holiness of Jerusalem (Zechariah 14:20-21)*

Verses 1-3. Last enemy siege against Jerusalem

Verses 4-7. Personal advent of Messiah

Zechariah 14:1-5. Post-millennialism has tried to find some explanation of this chapter, but has failed. The common view that the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in the year 70 A.D. is the burden of this prophecy is ridiculous. We read that “all nations will be gathered against Jerusalem.” Is this true of the destruction of Jerusalem under Titus? It was only one nation. Did the Lord then go forth and fight against the Romans? No! He used the Romans in judgment. Did His feet stand at that time upon the Mount of Olives? Did He come and all the saints with Him? Were the results of the year 70 the results predicted in the rest of this chapter? Any intelligent Christian must see how foolish it is to interpret this passage as having seen its fulfillment in the destruction of Jerusalem.

Nor is it true that previous sieges have fulfilled this chapter. Ptolemy Soter took Jerusalem about 315 B.C.; Antiochus the Great took the city in 203 B.C.; the Egyptian Scopas in 199 B.C.; Antiochus Epiphanes in 170 B.C. There were other sieges besides. But none of these sieges is predicted here. It is future.

What siege then is it? Some premillennial expositors have a very convenient way of calling everything “the battle of Armageddon” and claim that the twelfth and the fourteenth chapters predict one and the same event. But this is erroneous. It is not the beast, the head of the ten kingdoms, the Roman revived Empire. The details of prophecy concerning the last events can only be understood by distinguishing between the leaders of opposition. There is the beast, the political head of the western nations, the little horn of Daniel 7:1-28. He is in league with the second beast, coming out of the earth, with two horns like a lamb Revelation 13:1-18. This is the false Christ, the man of sin, who is also called in Revelation the false prophet. He has his seat in Jerusalem, where he poses as Israel’s Messiah-King and is worshipped as such. Then there is another, the king of the north, typified by the Assyrian, the great invader whom Ezekiel also describes. This king of the north is the sworn enemy of the one who is in Jerusalem, that is the false Messiah; they hate each other. The king of the north heads the confederacy of nations from the East, Russia, Persia, Gomer and different Asiatic nations. Then Jerusalem is finally attacked by these nations. It is this final attack which is described in this chapter (see Joel 2:1-32). But then the Lord goes forth, and fights against those nations, as when He fought in the day of battle Exodus 14:1-31; 2 Chronicles 20:15-37. He manifests His kingly power and glory in the defense of His city and His people. His feet stand in that day upon the Mount of Olives, the place so well known in His earthly life, the place from which He departed to go back to the Father. A great physical upheaval takes place, for the mountain splits in the center, toward the east and west, forming a great valley between. The earthquake mentioned is the same to which Amos refers Amos 1:11. All this has never been; it is future, and the

details of it will probably only be understood at the time of its fulfillment. The valley will be the avenue of escape, and the divided Olivet mountain will be ever after a witness to the literal fulfillment of God's Word.

“And Jehovah my God shall come, and all the saints with Thee.” Different manuscripts and versions have instead of “with Thee”--“with Him.” But the difficulty is cleared up when we consider that it is the Seer who addresses Jehovah, whose feet shall stand on the Mount of Olives. Zechariah bursts out in speaking to Him, “And Jehovah my God shall come, and all the saints with Thee.” What a glorious manifestation it will be when He is present and all His holy angels with Him!

Verses 8-21. Messianic kingdom established

Zechariah 14:6-11. Verses six and seven (Zechariah 14:6-7) have been rendered in different ways, and have been differently interpreted.

And it shall come to pass in that day That the light shall not be with brightness and with gloom, And the day shall be one. It shall be known unto Jehovah. Not day and not night. And at evening time there shall be light.

We believe that this passage means the physical phenomena in nature which are always connected with the day of the Lord Amos 5:18; Amos 8:9; Joel 2:31; Matthew 24:30, and other passages). Changes will then occur which will mean that the present order of day and night are superseded by another order, so that when the evening time comes it will be light. That day will Just be one day of light and glory. The glory light will probably be shining throughout the thousand years, and cover the earth as the waters cover the deep.

From verse eight (Zechariah 14:8) we learn that living waters shall go out from Jerusalem Ezekiel 47:1-23. This must be interpreted as a literal fact, and likewise as a symbol of the great spiritual blessings. “From the holy city go forth westward and eastward the waters which are destined to heal the long miseries of a world groaning under Satan's thralldom, themselves the effect and symbol of the rich blessing which Jehovah then diffuses far and wide, and this above all the changes ordinary in nature; in summer and in winter it shall be. Drought and frost will not affect them; neither will the obstruction of the hilly ground toward the west; the waters shall flow as steadily toward the great sea on the west as to the Dead Sea on the east.” The Lord Jesus Christ, Jehovah, then shall be King over all the earth; and His Name shall be one. His throne is established over the earth and He rules the nations in righteousness. In that day of His glorious manifestation His Name will be revealed as the One who on earth declared “I

and the Father are One”; He will be known as the One Lord and God, and worshipped as such. All idolatry is at an end and the abominations connected with it are abolished. Confusion is forever ended Zechariah 3:9.

Other physical changes in the land are indicated in verse ten (Zechariah 14:10), and from verse eleven (Zechariah 14:11) we learn that there shall be no more curse and that Jerusalem shall dwell safely.

Zechariah 14:12-15. This is the description of the dreadful punishment which will befall the enemies in that day. It is to be read in connection with the third verse, the Lord fighting against those nations, and the punishment will be upon them when He appears. Thus it is seen in Revelation 19:1-21. He appears, and after His appearing there is the scene of punishment of the enemies. “And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice to all the birds that fly in midheaven, Come and be gathered unto the great supper of God; that ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses and them that sit thereon, and the flesh of all men, both free and bond and small and great” Revelation 19:17-21.

“And they shall go forth, and look upon the carcasses of the men that have transgressed against Me; for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched; and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh” Isaiah 66:24.

Zechariah 14:16-19. It is clear from this passage that some nations, or representatives of nations, will be left of those who came against Jerusalem. They, with all the other nations of the world, will then know the Lord and worship Him. The temple will then stand in Jerusalem as the house of glory and a house of prayer for all nations. There will be a perfect worship, grand and glorious, and it will not be confined to Israel, but the nations will join it. We may learn perhaps from this verse that the Lord will leave every year once His place on His throne over the earth and come down to Jerusalem and show Himself in His glory before the worshipping multitudes in the earth, as He is seen in the New Jerusalem above. The occasion is the feast of tabernacles. It is the millennial feast. It is a feast kept in remembrance of Israel’s journey through the wilderness for forty years and all their subsequent wanderings. It stands also for the ingathering of the full harvest. It is a feast of joy, praise, and thanksgiving. The Jews keep it to the present day, though few know the full meaning of it. Every year when it comes again they read this 14th chapter of Zechariah. It is strange indeed. What a glorious feast that will be, kept there in Jerusalem, when the fullness at last has come! The fullness of the Gentiles has been gathered in, and is in the New Jerusalem; the fullness of Israel has come in the earth, and their receiving has been life from the dead, and Gentiles know the

glory of the Lord. Some find a difficulty here in the fact that it is stated that the nations, the residue of men, are to come up to Jerusalem, and the difficulty is that it will be impossible for all of them to do that. It is not at all necessary that every individual must go up to Jerusalem once in a year. Perhaps every nation will send representatives to the feast of tabernacles, and they come in the name of the different nations and bring their presents. This seems to be indicated in the visit of the wise men from the East, who came to Bethlehem to worship the new-born King Matthew 2:1-23. They brought gold, frankincense and myrrh. In Isaiah 60:6 we read of the coming of the Gentiles to Jerusalem when the Lord has come again. They shall come from Sheba; they shall bring gold and frankincense (the myrrh is left out here, for it speaks of suffering), and shall proclaim the praises of the Lord. As the wise men who came to Bethlehem were representatives of nations, so during the Millennium the nations will send delegations to the feast of tabernacles. What a scene that must be! How crowded Jerusalem will be by those from Greenland and from the interior of Africa, from India and the islands of the sea, as well as from the nations which composed the Roman empire. The ends of the earth have seen the salvation of God, and now their praise is heard in the city and mingling with the psalms sung by His own redeemed people.

On the other hand Zechariah 14:17-19 acquaint us with the fact that even during the coming age of the kingdom-glory there will be disobedience among the nations, which will be fully demonstrated at the close of the Millennium, when a final revolt takes place.

Zechariah 14:20-21. The most holy person in Israel, the high-priest, carried the inscription, "Holiness to Jehovah" around his mitre, but now even the little bells of the horses bear that inscription. In that temple which stands during the Millennium, sacrifices will be brought, but there will be no difference in the vessels which are used in Jerusalem, the meanest and smallest will be holy. In one word, all will be holy, all will be consecrated to Jehovah. What a perfect service that will be of the people which are then, in truth, a holy people. Application can be made of this to believers now. Surely everything the saint has, and his whole life, must be thus consecrated to Jehovah, to the Lord. No Canaanite will be there, nothing unclean. The Vulgate translates the word Canaanite with merchant. It stands, however, for everything that is unclean and an abomination. The city will be completely purged from it.

And of the New Jerusalem it is written, "There shall in no wise enter into it any thing unclean, or he that maketh an abomination and a lie, but only they that are written in the Lamb's book of life.... Without are the dogs, and the sorcerers, and

the fornicators, and the murderers, and the idolaters, and every one that loveth and maketh a lie” Revelation 21:27; Revelation 22:15.



Zechariah chapter 11 tells of two shepherds

Prophecies about the Messiah in Zechariah

Prophecies and Fulfillments

Zechariah is a book filled with Messianic prophecies. It has the third most in the Old Testament behind the book of Psalms and Isaiah. Zechariah is specific in his prophecies about the coming Messiah because Israel is yearning for the Messiah to come. Zechariah reminds his readers that the Messiah had both an immediate and long-term commitment to His people. The Gospel writers clearly understood that Zechariah devoted a great deal of attention to the theme of the coming Messiah for this reason, the Gospel writers were also aware that Jesus is fulfilling Zechariah’s prophecies about the Messiah.

I went through a great deal of the prophecies contained in the book of Ezekiel as well. Here, I would like to dig into some of the visions that Zechariah recorded

and show how they could have deep, prophetic importance. The book of Zechariah contains many visions and prophecies as we already know from above commentary, but there are three that I would like to focus on. We are going to look at the vision of the flying scroll, the vision of the ephah, and briefly touch on the vision of the horses. Not only are these three prophetically important, but also contain many shadows that point to other areas within the Bible and elsewhere.

The Scroll



We find Zechariah's vision of the flying scroll in Zechariah 5:1-4, which reads...

¹ Then I turned, and lifted up mine eyes, and looked, and behold a flying roll.

² And he said unto me, What seest thou? And I answered, I see a flying roll; the length thereof is twenty cubits, and the breadth thereof ten cubits.

³ Then said he unto me, This is the curse that goeth forth over the face of the whole earth: for every one that stealeth shall be cut off as on this side according to it; and every one that sweareth shall be cut off as on that side according to it.

⁴ I will bring it forth, saith the LORD of hosts, and it shall enter into the house of the thief, and into the house of him that sweareth falsely by my name: and it shall remain in the midst of his house, and shall consume it with the timber thereof and the stones thereof.

Now that we have an understanding of the entire section, we can begin to break it down.

The first verse tells us that Zechariah looked up and saw something called a “flying roll”. The word “roll” comes from the Hebrew word “*megillah*” meaning “roll, book, writing”. ¹ This is not referring to a literal book as we would think of a book today. This is referring to a scroll. In technical terms, what we would consider as a “book” is actually a “codex”. ² A “book” in ancient times would be in reference to a scroll. Also interesting to note is the Hebrew word used for “flying” could also imply a type of hovering. ³ Zechariah saw a literal scroll flying/hovering in the air.

Next, in the second verse, we learn the measurements of this flying scroll. We are told that the scroll is twenty cubits in length and ten cubits in breadth. It is very interesting that the exact measurement of the flying scroll is given. What is equally as interesting is that Zechariah knew what the exact measurement was just by looking at it. When we look deeper, we realize why. Ezra 6:14 states...

¹⁴ *And the elders of the Jews builded, and they prospered through the prophesying of Haggai the prophet and Zechariah the son of Iddo. And they builded, and finished it, according to the commandment of the God of Israel, and according to the commandment of Cyrus, and Darius, and Artaxerxes king of Persia.*

This is speaking of the building of the second temple. What we find out is that Zechariah was present at the building and, along with Haggai, he prophesied over the elders of the Jews while they built. Given his job and the amount of involvement he had, not to mention all of the scriptural references, Zechariah would have been well aware of the measurements used in the building of the temple.

1 Kings 6:3 tells us that the porch of Solomon's temple was twenty cubits by ten cubits. Given the fact that he was associated with the building of the second temple, and the fact that he would have been aware of this measurement, we begin to realize how it was that Zechariah was able to immediately know the exact measurements of the flying scroll. He recognized the size of the scroll as matching the size of the porch of the temple. 1 Kings 7:7 also tells us that it was from the porch, called the porch of judgment, where Solomon would judge. This has great significance when considering the meaning of Zechariah's vision of the flying scroll.

In the third verse, Zechariah is told that the scroll is *"the curse that goeth forth over the face of the whole earth"*. It is important to note that this curse was not only for Israel. This curse was meant for the entire population of planet Earth. We are told that *"for every one that stealeth shall be cut off as on this side according to it; and every one that sweareth shall be cut off as on that side according to it."* This is a judgment for two very specific sins; stealing and swearing. The judgment of being *"cut off"* is not the same as we would normally think. Usually, when we think of cut off, we think of a type of execution. Here, however, the Hebrew word used for *"cut off"* is *"naqah"* meaning *"to be cleaned out, be purged out"*.⁴ The implication here is that whoever will commit these sins will be utterly wiped out; collectively and completely cleared out of the way. It is a far harsher judgment than just a single, personal execution of sorts. It is more of a purification process for the entire Earth to remove those who commit these sins.

The two sins mentioned here are especially interesting. Considering the first sin mentioned, the word “*stealeth*” comes from the Hebrew word “*ganab*” meaning “*to steal, steal away, carry away*”.⁵ The word “*swear*” comes from the Hebrew word “*shaba*” meaning “*to swear, to curse*”.⁶ What we have here are the sins of stealing and cursing. We learn that each sin is judged from either side of the flying scroll.

What is important to note is that, typically, a scroll would not be written on both sides such as is described here. In ancient Israel, scrolls would be written on only one side. This scroll, however, is written on two sides. There are various shadows that can be looked at through this understanding. The first, and probably most important, shadow that can be found is that of the Ten Commandments. The 20th chapter of the book of Exodus gives us the Ten Commandments in their proper order. We must remember that the Ten Commandments were presented on two slabs of stone. There were five commandments on each slab. This is a direct shadow to the two sides of the flying scroll. To further prove this, if we look at the very center of each slab, the middle commandment in each list of five, we see an interesting parallel. The third commandment, being the very middle of the first slab of stone, is the commandment against taking the name of the Lord in vain. Essentially, this is referring to cursing against God. The eighth commandment, being the middle of the second slab of stone, is the commandment against stealing. The sins of cursing and stealing are the very sins that the flying scroll is sent to bring judgment upon. The flying scroll is a shadow of the Ten Commandments.

What is so amazing about God is He is not limited. Many times, He will have a single object be a shadow of many different things, but still with a common thread or theme connecting them. That is exactly what we have here with the flying scroll. When we go back to the idea of the scroll being written on both sides, we can find even more shadows throughout the Bible.

Ezekiel 2:7-3:4 reads...

⁷ *And thou shalt speak my words unto them, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear: for they are most rebellious.*

⁸ *But thou, son of man, hear what I say unto thee; Be not thou rebellious like that rebellious house: open thy mouth, and eat that I give thee.*

⁹ *And when I looked, behold, an hand was sent unto me; and, lo, a roll of a book was therein;*

¹⁰ *And he spread it before me; and it was written within and without: and there was written therein lamentations, and mourning, and woe.*

3 Moreover he said unto me, Son of man, eat that thou findest; eat this roll, and go speak unto the house of Israel.

2 So I opened my mouth, and he caused me to eat that roll.

3 And he said unto me, Son of man, cause thy belly to eat, and fill thy bowels with this roll that I give thee. Then did I eat it; and it was in my mouth as honey for sweetness.

4 And he said unto me, Son of man, go, get thee unto the house of Israel, and speak with my words unto them.

Ezekiel was given a scroll that was written on both sides, just like the flying scroll of Zechariah is described. Ezekiel was commanded to eat this scroll, which was as sweet as honey. It was through the eating of this scroll that Ezekiel was able to speak with the words of God Himself. The scroll, in essence, was the Word of God. We can clearly see that the flying scroll contained the Word of God as well. This is also reminiscent of another scroll mentioned in the book of Revelation. In Revelation 10:8-11, we read...

8 And the voice which I heard from heaven spake unto me again, and said, Go and take the little book which is open in the hand of the angel which standeth upon the sea and upon the earth.

9 And I went unto the angel, and said unto him, Give me the little book. And he said unto me, Take it, and eat it up; and it shall make thy belly bitter, but it shall be in thy mouth sweet as honey.

10 And I took the little book out of the angel's hand, and ate it up; and it was in my mouth sweet as honey: and as soon as I had eaten it, my belly was bitter.

11 And he said unto me, Thou must prophesy again before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings.

This is another important shadow to consider. John was commanded to eat the book, which is the same thing as a scroll as used in this passage, and it was as sweet as honey. We also learn that it was bitter in John's stomach. This scroll, just like the scroll Ezekiel was commanded to eat, allowed John to prophesy to the whole world. The only difference is that Ezekiel's scroll was only to prophesy to Israel, whereas John's was to prophesy to the entire world. That might be the reason that John's scroll became bitter in his stomach. It could be that, because it was for the entire world at the last of the last times, the importance and burden was heavier. In that sense, we can see the scroll of

Ezekiel meant to prophesy to Israel as a shadow for the future scroll of John that would be meant to prophesy to the entire world. All of the parallels line up.

The last shadow we will look at for the flying scroll of Zechariah is found in the fifth chapter of Revelation. This shadow is especially interesting given its prophetic importance. Revelation 5:1 reads...

¹ And I saw in the right hand of him that sat on the throne a book written within and on the backside, sealed with seven seals.

Again, just like in Revelation 10, the book here is the same thing as a scroll. The first thing we can realize is that this scroll is written on both sides, just as the flying scroll of Zechariah and the scroll of Ezekiel. When reading the entire chapter, we discover that it is Jesus who possesses this scroll. The scroll is sealed by seven seals which represent judgments to come upon the earth as each seal is broken. The idea of judgment ties back to Solomon's porch of judgment and the measurement of Zechariah's scroll. Zechariah's vision was a shadow of the scroll in Revelation chapter 5, as it is described as being written on both sides and bringing about judgment.

As a quick side note, we read in Revelation 5:6 that the Lamb Jesus had seven eyes, which represent His seven spirits. This could have something to do with the stone in Zechariah 3:9, which is also described as having seven eyes. This would seem to make sense because this stone in Zechariah is said to be engraved, much like in Revelation 2:17, where we are told of the white stone that contains a new name for those who receive it. Zechariah 3:8 makes mention of Jesus Christ as the Branch. The very next verse describes the stone with seven eyes, as well as mentions that God will remove the iniquity of the land in that day. Comparing that with Revelation, it is clear the same thing is being described.

Going back to the flying scroll of Zechariah, we can realize that this scroll is not mentioned as having any kind of seals attached, such as the one in the book of Revelation. Since the scroll in Zechariah is already bringing about judgment, it would be safe to assume that the seals have already been broken and the flying scroll is not bound by the seals. This makes sense due to the fact that the scroll is sent to execute a judgment of a complete purging of the sinners on Earth. This, in my humble opinion, is a direct reference, or shadow, of the Day of the Lord.

We must remember that Zechariah saw the scroll flying/hovering for some time before judgment came. This means there could have been time for other events to transpire within the prophetic timeline as described in Revelation. This would seem to make sense given Zechariah's next vision. The second vision that completes the fifth chapter of Zechariah is the vision of the ephah.

The Ephah



The vision of the ephah and the vision of the flying scroll have both had their fair share of speculation throughout history. Nowadays, there are many people that will try and attribute the vision of the scroll and

the vision of the ephah to UFOs, the Alien Gospel, and the Coming Great Deception. While I do not see any Biblical evidence to support the idea of the flying scroll representing a type of UFO or similar craft piloted by fallen angels masquerading as our alien creators, I do see Biblical evidence for that in the vision of the ephah. That evidence is what we will be looking at in this section.

Zechariah 5:5-11 reads...

⁵ *Then the angel that talked with me went forth, and said unto me, Lift up now thine eyes, and see what is this that goeth forth.*

⁶ *And I said, What is it? And he said, This is an ephah that goeth forth. He said moreover, This is their resemblance through all the earth.*

⁷ *And, behold, there was lifted up a talent of lead: and this is a woman that sitteth in the midst of the ephah.*

⁸ *And he said, This is wickedness. And he cast it into the midst of the ephah; and he cast the weight of lead upon the mouth thereof.*

⁹ *Then lifted I up mine eyes, and looked, and, behold, there came out two women, and the wind was in their wings; for they had wings like the wings of a stork: and they lifted up the ephah between the earth and the heaven.*

¹⁰ *Then said I to the angel that talked with me, Whither do these bear the ephah?*

¹¹ *And he said unto me, To build it an house in the land of Shinar: and it shall be established, and set there upon her own base.*

Verses five and six give us the basic setup of the vision. Zechariah sees an ephah moving through the sky and is told “*this is their resemblance through all the earth*”. A very interesting thing to note is that the word used for “*resemblance*” can also just as easily mean “*eye*”, and even some noted theologians have

thought this to be the case. ⁷ If this is referring to “eye” instead of “resemblance”, it adds a whole new dimension to the passage. Some have attributed it to the all-seeing eye connected to the Illuminati. Others, me included, would take this back to our enemy Satan and his “eye”, whose establishment is destroyed by the Hand of God. This is the message that is found when we consider the meanings of each Hebrew letter that make up the name of Jesus.

Each Hebrew letter has its own unique meaning, so when you have a Hebrew word, you have the meaning of the word, but also the meaning of each letter that makes up the word to add further insight. The Hebrew name of Jesus is Yeshua, which is made up of the letters Yod, Shin, Vav, and Ayin. Yod means “hand”, Shin means “destroy”, Vav means “establishment”, and Ayin means “eye”. ⁸ This can be shown further in 1 John 3:8, which reads...

⁸ He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.

Another interesting side note, the word used for “resemblance” is the same Hebrew word/letter “ayin” that is the last letter in Yeshua’s name, meaning “eye”. If this ephah is “their eye” instead of “their resemblance”, then we have something very interesting. While “their” is plural, “eye” is singular. This would mean that whatever the ephah represents, they share a single eye of sorts. This could be the very establishment of the eye of the enemy that Jesus is to destroy.

Going back to the ephah and what it might represent, we discover that the text is not completely clear who is being referred to as “their”. The most accepted answer is “their” is referring to the sinners back in the vision of the scroll. The idea is to go backwards through the text from “their” to find out the subject. Normally, the first subject that can fit is the right one.

Here, however, it is a bit difficult to know for sure because we are within a completely new vision. Within this vision, the only subject that has been addressed is the ephah itself. If “their” is referring to the ephah, then it would seem to say that there are multiple objects throughout the earth and they resemble this ephah. If “their” is referring to the sinners in the previous vision, then the spiritual or metaphorical resemblance of the sinners is that of the ephah. That is, of course, if we are to go with the resemblance translation instead of the eye translation. Either way, there is a cryptic meaning that seems to point to the same thing. All we need to do first is define what an ephah actually is.

The word “*ephah*” comes from the Hebrew word “*eyphah*” meaning “1 - a dry measure of quantity, equal to 3 seahs, 10 omers; the same as the liquid measure bath; (about 9 imperial gallons (40 l), rabbinical writings give sizes of one-half this amount) 2 - the receptacle for measuring or holding that amount”.⁹ We can think of this in terms of a cup or a gallon. Much how we would have a cup of flour or a gallon of milk, the same principal can be applied to the ephah. The cup of flour is in reference to the measurement and the container. The cup of flour is contained in a cup. The same goes for the gallon of milk. The gallon of milk is contained in a gallon. That is exactly what we have when it comes to the word “*ephah*”. It is the name of the measurement and of the container. Since this is a vision that Zechariah is having, it would be referring to the container instead of the measurement. If we can discover what the ephah container actually looked like in Zechariah’s time, we will have an easier time understanding what he actually saw.

Taking even a quick glance at this should bring about new meaning to the idea of this being “*their resemblance*”, or even “*their eye*”. If it is meant to be “*their resemblance*” and it is referring to the ephah itself, what does this ephah resemble? I would say it bears a striking resemblance to many of the UFOs that are being witnessed and reported. If it is meant as “*their resemblance*” and is referring back to the sinners of the flying scroll vision, then the more spiritual or metaphoric resemblance would be addressed. What do the UFOs promulgate? They are the carriers of this lie, this curse to God, which states we were created by aliens and not God, known as the Alien Gospel. This would include all the other false doctrines that go along with that. They are stealing away the faith of many and stealing many out of the Church. We have references to both of the sins that are dealt with in the flying scroll vision.

If it is meant as “*their eye*” and is referring back to the sinners of the flying scroll vision, this would fit as well. The establishment of the eye of the enemy in the last days will be built upon a foundation of false doctrine, as we will soon discover further evidence for later in the vision of the ephah. The false doctrine that causes the great apostasy, in all likelihood, will be or have something to do with the Alien Gospel. If it is meant as “*their eye*” and is referring to the ephah itself, then it is plain and simple in meaning. This ephah in the air, this UFO of sorts, is a representation of the eye of the enemy. This is how they watch us, study us, and find how best to deceive us. Whichever of these four interpretations is correct, they all lead back to the same thing. They all point to the Alien Gospel.

We can find further evidence to support this by looking at the rest of the vision. Zechariah 5:7 reads...

⁷ And, behold, there was lifted up a talent of lead: and this is a woman that sitteth in the midst of the ephah.

The word for “*talent*” refers to a weight and a circular shape.¹⁰ Also, the word for “*sitteth*” denotes the act of dwelling or residing. This woman was not just sitting inside of the ephah. The woman dwelt there. The ephah is the woman’s residence. This could mean that her whole drive or motivation is contained in what she promulgates with this ephah. This could also have reference to the fall of the angels who lost their first estate and proper residence. The fallen angels no longer have a home in Heaven, but now seem to reside somewhere in the air, the space between Heaven and Earth, or what is sometimes referred to as the Second Heaven. It is important to keep this in mind as we move forward. Zechariah 5:8 reads:

⁸ And he said, This is wickedness. And he cast it into the midst of the ephah; and he cast the weight of lead upon the mouth thereof.

The name of the woman is Wickedness. Another word for this can be Lawlessness and can be compared with the whore of Babylon, as we will soon see. After identifying the woman, we discover the purpose for the talent of lead. This heavy, circular piece of lead was being used as a lid to contain the woman inside the ephah. We discover the reason in the next three verses, which are the last three of the chapter and the end of the vision of the ephah. Zechariah 5:9-11 reads...

⁹ Then lifted I up mine eyes, and looked, and, behold, there came out two women, and the wind was in their wings; for they had wings like the wings of a stork: and they lifted up the ephah between the earth and the heaven.

¹⁰ Then said I to the angel that talked with me, Whither do these bear the ephah?

¹¹ And he said unto me, To build it an house in the land of Shinar: and it shall be established, and set there upon her own base.

There is a lot to look at here. First we will discover what we can about the two women with the wings of storks.

What is first interesting to note is that these spiritual beings lifted the ephah between the earth and the heaven. I would suggest that is representing where the fallen angels reside. What is also especially important to note is that these spiritual beings are women. Many times in scripture, when trying to convey spiritual ideas and principals, shadows of real life are used. One such example is using the idea of an adulterous woman as a shadow of idolatry, worshipping false gods, or following false doctrines. We see this in the book of Revelation

when it refers to the whore of Babylon. The fact that these two spiritual beings are women could mean that they have some part in deceiving mankind away from God. This can be further shown by looking at their description.

We are told that the two women have the wings of storks. There are two main places in the Bible where we can find references to storks and what they could represent. Leviticus 11:19 and Deuteronomy 14:18 tells us that God considers the stork as an unclean bird. The stork was not kosher. It was not meant to be eaten. Many times, God will use unclean animals to represent spiritual uncleanness, sin, rebellion, and other things of that nature. This shows us, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that these two women are not on the side of God, but are on the side of the enemy.

The two stork-women might be an evil shadow of the two witnesses. Remember, for everything God has, Satan has an evil and inferior shadow of it. These two women, as we will soon discover, play a very important role in the establishment of the enemy and their false doctrines. The two witnesses of God in the book of Revelation are sent to proclaim the truth and correct doctrine. What is also interesting is that the eleventh chapter of the book of Revelation starts off by making references to the measurements of the temple. This is exactly how Zechariah 5 starts off with the flying scroll vision. First, before anything else, the measurements pointing back to the temple are described. After the measurements in Revelation 11, the very next thing discussed is God's two witnesses. In Zechariah 5, after the measurements are discussed, the next thing is the ephah vision with these two stork-women. They are a polar opposite of the two witnesses of God in every way. These two stork-women will play a part in the spiritual aspect of promulgating the lie that brings about the apostasy while the two witnesses of God will be trying to call back humanity with the truth. Next, we can find out what the two stork-women have to do with the ephah itself.

In what I find to be the most interesting verse of this entire chapter, verse 11, we find out the true purpose of the ephah, the woman in the ephah, and the stork-women carrying the ephah. We learn that the two stork-women are taking the ephah *"To build it an house in the land of Shinar: and it shall be established, and set there upon her own base."* We have a reference to an establishment, such as what we looked at earlier concerning the establishment of the eye. We also have a reference to Shinar, which was where the tower of Babel, and later the city of Babylon, was built.

The Hebrew word used for *"build"* in this verse is not only referring to a physical act of constructing a dwelling, but also could refer to a rebuilding of a structure or even the building up of a family.¹¹ The rebuilding aspect could be a

direct reference to the tower of Babel that is discussed in Genesis 11. This has all sorts of shadows tying back to Nimrod, the first one-world governmental system and one-world religion, the false doctrines the people practiced, and even back to the idea of Nimrod himself attempting to contact the fallen angels and enter Heaven. I have gone into extensive detail concerning Nimrod and the Tower of Babel in my book *Disclosure*, so for our purposes here, only a brief review is necessary.

We also learn that this house or family that is to be built will have this ephah as its base. The ephah itself, with the woman Wickedness, will be the very foundation of the building. This is where all of the false doctrines, idolatry, and worship of false gods will have its revival. It will originate here, in the land of Shinar, just as in Genesis with the Tower of Babel. The Tower of Babel was the place of man's original collective rebellion against God. I believe we can look at this as a shadow for what is to come in our prophetic future. Just as Nimrod attempted to reach into the heavens, enlist the fallen angels, and overthrow God, we will see mankind reach out into the heavens toward our supposed alien creators, enlist their help when they come to offer it, and strip God out of all human belief. At that point, mankind won't have a use for God because the "proof" of the Alien Gospel will be tangible and for all to see. That is the coming great deception we must all be aware of so we can guard against it when that day comes. We need to wait on Jesus and look for His return first and foremost, but we must also know how to defend against any deception or attack of the enemy.

This woman in the ephah is the ultimate spirit of false doctrine. I believe it is this same woman that is referred to as the whore of Babylon in Revelation 17 and 18. We are told in Revelation 17:15 that the woman sits on many waters, which is representative of all peoples, nations, and tongues. This is a worldwide deception. We also learn at the end of chapter 17 of Revelation that the whore is also a great city. This can relate back to the woman in the ephah. A house was built upon the base of the ephah containing the woman. Whether this is the literal location of this city or not is beside the point. Wherever it will manifest on Earth, this is the source of the deception.

Another very interesting verse is Revelation 18:2, which reads...

² And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird.

This is a description of the fall of the city Babylon that was represented by the woman. We learn that it has become the habitation of devils and foul spirits. Next, we get a peculiar description. We are told that it has become a cage of

every unclean and hateful bird. We found out earlier that the stork is an unclean bird, and it was the description of a stork that Zechariah attributed to the two women carrying the ephah. I believe this could be a reference to the two stork-women. The very city and deception they were trying to implement has become their cage. There is no escape from God's judgment.

There is one more important shadow that I want to address concerning the vision of the flying scroll and the vision of the ephah. In Leviticus 16, we read of the two goats that were to be used for atonement. We read that one goat was to be slaughtered while the other was to be abandoned in the wilderness for "*a scapegoat*". The goat does not *become* a scapegoat. Rather, the goat is *for* a scapegoat. What is really interesting is that the word "*scapegoat*", as used here, actually comes from the Hebrew word "*azazel*" which is a name that comes from the Book of Enoch. Azazel was one of the 200 watcher angels that fell from Heaven to mate with human women. This is the same event that is described in Genesis chapter 6. In Enoch, it is said that Azazel is the worst of all the 200 and, when God judged the fallen angels, all sin was ascribed to Azazel. This is why, in Leviticus, one goat was slaughtered for atonement and one goat was abandoned in the wilderness for Azazel.

We can look at these two goats as shadows of the two visions in Zechariah chapter 5. The first goat was to be slaughtered for atonement. This is a shadow of the vision of the flying scroll. The flying scroll came to bring about judgment and cleanse the entire world of sin. What the first goat's job was for the people of Israel, the flying scroll's job is for the entire world. The second goat that was sent out to Azazel is a shadow of the vision of the ephah. The goat was to be sent out into the wilderness to Azazel who, as recorded in the book of Enoch, was judged and buried somewhere in the wilderness until the time of the final judgment. When Azazel fell, he brought all sorts of deception to mankind that made them turn from God. That is exactly what we see with the woman in the ephah. She is buried, in a sense, in the wilderness and the establishment of the enemy is built upon her. This is to bring about all kinds of deceptions that revolve around a return of the fallen angels in physical form masquerading as our alien creators.

These are all Biblical shadows we can use to gain deeper insight into what is being taught. We can use these shadows to gain more perspective into our prophetic future. It is through these shadows that we can be better prepared for the days ahead. Now that we have looked at the scroll and the ephah, we can look into Zechariah's visions of the horses.

The Horses

I wrote a lot about Zechariah's horses in *Disclosure*, so some of this will be a brief review. I showed how the horses of Zechariah 6 could be connected to the religion of Islam and a possible prophetic fulfilment. While I do still believe this to be a possibility, I see another possibility that ties back to the Alien Gospel, apostasy, and the possible return of the Nephilim. This is what we will be looking at here.

We also discovered the connection between the grisled/bay horses of Zechariah chapter 6 and the pale/green horse of Revelation chapter 6. We also discovered that the horses of Zechariah were set out to fulfil the will of God while the horses of Revelation are set out to fulfil the will of the enemy. Taking the Biblical descriptions back to the original Hebrew and Greek languages, we were able to see the significance of the colours of the horses to show that the agents of the enemy are nothing more than an inferior duplicate of the agents of God.

Before closing up, I want to touch briefly on another possible interpretation. It is entirely possible that the pale/green horse of Revelation could be a representation of the Alien Gospel and a possible return of the Nephilim. We know from Zechariah that the horses of God were brought to the earth with Heavenly chariots. It is important to note that the horses were not pulling the chariots. The horses were inside of the chariots. Whatever the proper interpretation and definition of these Heavenly chariots are, it would seem that the enemy has an evil and inferior duplicate, or shadow, of them as well.

Since the horses that Zechariah saw were brought to the earth with chariots, it would make sense that Satan will do something similar when the time of the pale/green horse comes. I can see this as a physical manifestation of the chariots of the enemy being portrayed as alien spacecraft. If Satan decides to, once again, steal an idea from God and twist it to suit his own desires, the pale/green horse of Revelation could be signifying the physical appearance of UFOs and the promulgation of the Alien Gospel throughout the entire world. The pale/green horse could be signifying the great apostasy. The fourth seal of Revelation could be the arrival and worldwide acceptance of the coming great deception. At the very least, it could be a shadow pointing toward the end-time fulfillment of the falling away of the Church.

Conclusion

While some of these conclusions might be speculative, we must keep in mind what we are dealing with here. We are trying to look ahead in time with the Bible as our guide to determine what is in our future. The problem with Biblical end-time prophecy is that it is incredibly subjective. Conversely, the exciting

thing about Biblical end-time prophecy is that it is incredibly subjective. We get to choose how we will handle it.

If we want to remain stubborn and prideful, we will let our differences in eschatology lead to arguments and division within the Church. This is a trap set by the enemy. If, however, we can get over ourselves, forsake pride, embrace humility, and discuss these things in humbleness, we will find there is a great deal of knowledge and wisdom that can be achieved. We can discover that we hold great strength in our differences if we remain a single body.

None of us has all the answers. The best we can hope for is to have a few small pieces. What we can discover is that other people have a few small pieces as well. However, we must also realize that God still holds some of the pieces for Himself. Until we actually arrive there in the prophetic timeline, we will never be able to see the entire picture. All we can do is the best we can with what we have. If we reason together as a single body and come at this in a like-minded way, we can all contribute our pieces, work together, and finally begin to put this enormous eschatological puzzle together. Outside of that, we must learn to let God fill in the blanks Himself, with His own pieces, in His own perfect timing.

The Prophecies and Fulfillments from Zechariah

1. Zechariah 2:10-13 – The Messiah on the Throne. Revelation 5:13, 6:9, 21:24
2. Zechariah 3:8 – Messiah would be God's servant. John 17:4
3. Zechariah 6:12-13 – Messiah would be Priest and King. Hebrews 8:1
4. Zechariah 9:9a – Messiah greeted with rejoicing in Jerusalem. Matthew 21:8-10
5. Zechariah 9:9b – Messiah beheld as king. John 12:12-13
6. Zechariah 9:9c – Messiah would be just. John 5:30
7. Zechariah 9:9d – Messiah would bring salvation. Luke 19:10
8. Zechariah 9:9e – Messiah would be humble. Matthew 11:29
9. Zechariah 9:9f – Messiah would be riding a donkey into Jerusalem. Matthew 21:6-9
10. Zechariah 10:4 – Messiah would be the cornerstone. Ephesians 2:20
11. Zechariah 11:4-6a – When the Messiah comes, Israel's leaders will be unfit. Matthew 23:1-4
12. Zechariah 11:4-6b – Rejection of Messiah cause God to remove His protection. Luke 19:41-44
13. Zechariah 11:4-6c – Messiah rejected in favour of another king. John 19:13-15
14. Zechariah 11:7 – Messiah to have ministry to the poor. Matthew 9:35-36

15. Zechariah 11:8a – Unbelief forces Messiah to reject the people. Matthew 23:33
16. Zechariah 11:8b – Messiah is despised. Matthew 27:20
17. Zechariah 11:9 – Messiah stops ministering to those who rejected him. Matthew 13:10-11
18. Zechariah 11:10-11a – Again, rejection causes God to remove His protection. Luke 19:41-44
19. Zechariah 11:10-11b – Messiah would be God. John 14:7
20. Zechariah 11:12-13a – Messiah betrayed for 30 pieces of silver. Matthew 26:14
21. Zechariah 11:12-13b – Messiah rejected. Matthew 26:14-15
22. Zechariah 11:12-13c – Thirty pieces of silver thrown into the house of the Lord. Matthew 27:3-5
23. Zechariah 11:12-13d – Messiah would be God. John 12:45
24. Zechariah 12:10a – Messiah's body would be pierced. John 19:34-37
25. Zechariah 12:10b – Messiah would be both God and man. John 10:30
26. Zechariah 12:10c – Messiah would be rejected. John 1:11
27. Zechariah 13:7a – It is God's will that He die for mankind. John 18:11
28. Zechariah 13:7b – Messiah will die a violent death. Matthew 27:35
29. Zechariah 13:7c – Messiah would be both God and man. John 14:9
30. Zechariah 13:7d – Israel scattered as a result of rejecting Him. Matthew 26:31-56

There are thirty Messianic prophecies in this little book. There are seven prophecies about the Messiah being either rejected or despised; 4 prophecies about the Messiah being God; three prophecies about the Messiah being king. Referring to Christ as "The Branch" in two passages (Zech 3:8, 6:12), Zechariah emphasizes the saving nature of the Messiah. The Messiah is also referred to as "the Stone" (Zech. 3:9), God's "Servant" (3:8), "a priest" (6:13), and "a king" (9:9). "The picture of the Messiah in 6:12-13 has been hailed as the most inclusive and complete portrait of the coming King of Israel to be found in the pages of the Old Testament; Joshua the high priest, crowned and honoured is a typical of Messiah the Branch, the Priest-King. These fulfilments are very important for Christians. These are proof that Jesus is the Messiah because he fulfilled the prophecies about the Messiah. The Jews were looking and waiting for the Messiah, they knew the prophecies and were blinded to see that Jesus was fulfilling them all right in front of them. These are specific prophecies that are fulfilled exactly by Christ. These prophecies solidify his status as the Messiah.



Mount of Olives from Jerusalem, site of the personal advent of Messiah

Commentary on the Book Malachi

Introduction

We know nothing of the person of this prophet. His name only is given in the record. Critics have therefore doubted whether Malachi is really the personal name of the prophet, and many believe that it is merely an ideal name, given to the unknown person, on account of his message. Malachi means “my messenger” or “the messenger of Jehovah.” The Targum Jonathan, an Aramaic paraphrase, adds after the name of Malachi, “Cujus nomen appellatur Ezra scriba,” whose name is called Ezra the Scribe, thus claiming that the great and good Ezra is Malachi. But why should Ezra hide behind an assumed name? This is unworthy of the man, and more so of the Holy Spirit. Many of the leading expositors have accepted the theory that Malachi is the official name of the prophet, whoever he may have been. One of the reasons for this theory is that “the first verse does not contain any further personal description, and that nothing is said about his father or place of birth.” But Obadiah and Habakkuk show the same omissions. Nor is it true that nothing was known historically of a

person by name of Malachi. The Talmud has a statement which makes Malachi a member of the great synagogue, to which also the two post-exilic prophets Haggai and Zechariah belonged. Other traditions claim that he was of the tribe of Zebulun, born in Supha. There is no reason to doubt that Malachi is the real name of the prophet.

The Date of His Prophecy

This also has caused a great deal of dispute. That he prophesied after the captivity has never been doubted. Furthermore, the reading of his utterances makes it clear that he prophesied after Haggai and Zechariah. We learn that the temple has been completely finished, and the temple worship with priests has been restored for a number of years. After Ezra and Nehemiah's beneficent influence had passed the people went into a decline, and the conditions which the prophet rebukes were the results of backsliding. The abuses which were corrected by Ezra and Nehemiah had taken hold upon the people again. The exact time can hardly be fixed. It seems by comparing Malachi 1:8 with Nehemiah 5:15; Nehemiah 5:18 that Nehemiah was no longer governor when Malachi exercised his office.

The Message of Malachi

As the last prophetic voice of the Old Testament, Malachi, in unison with all other prophets, announces the coming of the Messiah and Points once more to Him. The next prophetic voice, after the four hundred silent years, is the voice in the wilderness, the herald of the King, of whom Malachi predicted that he should come. But the message of Malachi is overwhelmingly condemnatory. "The great moral principle unfolded in this book is the insensibility of the people to that which Jehovah was for them, and to their own iniquity with respect to Jehovah--their want of reverence for God, their despisal of Jehovah. Alas! this insensibility had reached such a point that, when the very actions which proved their contempt were laid before their consciences, they saw no harm in them. Nevertheless, this did not alter the purposes and counsels of God, although it brought judgment upon those who were guilty of it" (Malachi 1:2; Malachi 1:6; Malachi 2:14; Malachi 3:7; Malachi 3:13, Synopsis of the Bible.) .

It is unquestionably true that the spirit manifested by the people in Malachi's day assumed later the concrete forms expressed by the two leading sects of Judaism, when our Lord was on earth, the Pharisees and the Sadducees. "The outward or grosser kind of idolatry had been rendered thoroughly distasteful to the people by the sufferings of the exile; and its place was taken by the more refined idolatry of dead-work righteousness, and trust in the outward fulfillment

of the letter of the divine commands without any deeper confession of sins, or humiliation under the Word and the will of God.” It has been well stated that “Malachi is like a late evening, which brings a long day to a close; but he is also the morning dawn, which bears a glorious day in its womb.” The shadows are dark, but there is the rising of the Sun of Righteousness, still to take place, when all shadows flee away.

But beside the apostate masses of the people, steeped in a dead formalism, there is seen in the book of Malachi the faithful remnant. It is interesting to follow this remnant, we have so often mentioned in our annotations, through the entire Jewish history, past, present and future. There was always a godly remnant. We see that remnant in the wilderness wandering of Israel; there was a remnant during the period of the judges, and in every other period, like the sad days of Ahab’s wicked rule, when despondent Elijah desired to die, and the Lord informed him that there were seven thousand who had not bowed the knee to the image of Baal. There was a remnant when Jerusalem was captured by Nebuchadnezzar: a remnant returned from the captivity, and when the returned exiles degenerated, as seen in Malachi, there were still the few left who assembled together and whom the Lord owned.

In Romans 11:1-36 we read that at the present time, during this age, there is likewise a remnant according to the election of grace. It is not a small remnant, who, during this age, turn to the Lord, believe on Christ and thus become members of the Body of Christ, in which there is neither Jew nor Gentile. And when the age closes, and the nation faces the final calamity in the great tribulation, and the acceptance of the false Christ, there will be that godly remnant, as we have so often shown in our comments on the prophetic word.

The Lessons for Our Age

The Jewish age with all its glorious manifestations of the Lord in behalf of His people Israel, and the great revelations given by the prophets of the Lord, did not improve in its development and become a better age. Neither does our age improve and become better, the age in which God has revealed His best and offers to man the riches of His graces in the Person of His blessed Son our Lord. It ends as Old Testament times ended, in failure and apostasy. The moral conditions of the Jews in the days of Malachi are the moral conditions of Christendom. But as then, so there is now, a remnant of God’s own, who are faithful to Him, and whom He acknowledges as His true Church.

The Division of Malachi

We divide the prophecy of Malachi in six sections: 1. Jehovah's Love for His People (1:1-5). 2. The Rebuke of the Priests (1:6-2:9). 3. Rebuke of the Social Conditions (2:10-16). 4. The Announcement of the Messenger and the Day of the Lord (3:1-6). 5. Rebuke for Defrauding the Lord (3:7-15). 6. The Remnant and the Concluding Prophecy (3:16-4:6) .



Malachi prophesied of the Messiah's forerunner', John the Baptist, who baptised in the river Jordan.

1. Jehovah's Love for His People

Chapter 1:1-5

Verses 1-2. Declaration of that love

Verses 3-5. Contrast to Esau

The message of Malachi begins with the sublime statement, "I have loved you, saith Jehovah." It is the message to Israel. This love is written large on every page of their history. A former prophet gave the message from the Lord, "You

only have I known of all the families of the earth” Amos 3:2. And long before that Moses had told them, “Only the Lord had a delight in thy fathers to love them, and He chose their seed after them, even you above all people, as it is this day” Deuteronomy 10:15. And the man of God in his final utterance burst out in praise, “Yea, He loved the people” Deuteronomy 33:3. And this generation, brought back through His mercy from Babylon, the generation that had listened to the marvelous words of Haggai and Zechariah, could brazenly answer back, “Wherein hast Thou loved us?” How deep they had sunk! Greater still is the insensibility of nominal Christendom which rejects, yea, despises, the great love wherewith He has loved us in the gift of His Son.

Then the Lord in infinite patience answered them, “Was not Esau Jacob’s brother? saith Jehovah: yet I loved Jacob, and hated Esau, and laid his mountains and his heritage waste for the dragons of the wilderness.” This takes us back to Genesis, but in vain do we look for this statement in that first book of the Bible. Though it is quoted also in Romans 9:1-33, it is nowhere to be found in connection with the story of the birth of the twins. The late scholar, William Kelly, has expressed the whole matter so well that we can do nothing better than to quote his excellent comment. “It is only in Malachi that He says ‘Esau have I hated.’ I could conceive nothing more dreadful than to say so in Genesis. Never does Scripture represent God as saying before the child was born and had manifested his iniquity and proud malice, ‘Esau have I hated.’ There is where the mind of man is so erroneous. It is not meant, however, that God’s choice was determined by the character of the individual. This would make man the ruler rather than God. Not so; God’s choice flows out of His own wisdom and nature. It suits and is worthy of Himself; but the reprobation of any man and of every unbeliever is never a question of the sovereignty of God. It is the choice of God to do good where and how He pleases; it is never the purpose of His will to hate any man. There is no such doctrine in the Bible. I hold, therefore, that, while election is most clearly taught in the Scriptures, the consequences that men draw from election, namely, the reprobation of the non-elect, is a mere reproduction of fatalism, common to some heathen and to all Mohammedans, the unfounded deduction of man’s reasoning in divine things.” With these good words we agree perfectly. The hatred against Esau is mentioned in this last book, because it was well-deserved, after all the opposition and defiance of God the descendants of Esau, Edom, had manifested. But the love wherewith Jacob was loved was undeserved. His love for His people had been fully manifested, as well as His displeasure against Edom by laying his mountains and heritage waste, and all their attempts at reconstruction failed. God was against him on account of Edom’s wicked ways.

1:6-2:16. Oracle against the priests and people

1:6-14. The impenitence of the priests

2:1-9. Their impenitence to be punished

2:10-16. First oracle against the people

The Rebuke of the Priests

Chapter 1:6-2:9

The priests, the religious leaders of the people, are described first in their evil ways, and rebuked. But the rebuke includes the entire people, for it is true, “like priests like people.” The Lord called Israel to be His firstborn son, and therefore, nationally, He is their Father. He is the Lord, and Israel called to be His servant. But they had not honored Him, as a son should honor the father by obedience; they did not fear Him, but despised His Name. This charge brought forth from the side of the priests another brazen statement, the result of their hypocritical self-righteousness. They answered back, demanding proof of the charge by saying, “Wherein have we despised Thy Name?” They seemed to be hardened in their consciences, though they kept up outward appearances. Such, too, is the religious condition in much of Christendom. Another charge follows, the charge that they offer polluted bread, which brought forth the retort, “Wherein have we polluted Thee?” They had considered the table of the Lord contemptible; instead of offering upon the altar the very best, as demanded in the law, they showed their contempt by bringing the blind, the lame and the sick, a thing which they would never have done to an earthly governor, who would have been sorely displeased at such an insult and rejected their person on account of it. They had treated the Lord of Hosts shamefully in their worship. Is it different in Christendom? Under such conditions, even if they were to pray to Him to be gracious, would He, or could He, regard their persons and listen to their prayers (Malachi 1:9) ?

Malachi 1:10 has often been interpreted to mean that the priests were covetous and demanded money for every little service, the opening of doors and the kindling of a fire. It has another meaning. The better rendering is, “O, that some among you would even shut the doors of the temple.” The doors are the doors which lead from the outer court into the holy part. The Lord declares that it would be more profitable if they would shut these doors, and kindle no longer a fire upon the altar for nought; in other words, He wishes that the whole outward worship might be stopped. The last sentence of this verse shows this is the

correct interpretation. "I have no pleasure in you, saith the Lord of Hosts, neither will I accept an offering at your hand." Nor has He today any pleasure in the unscriptural worship of ritualistic Christendom, or the dead, Spiritless worship of an apostate Protestantism.

The next verse (Malachi 1:11) is a prophecy. Is it fulfilled today, during this age? We think not; it refers to the millennial age. Critics say that the passage refers to the worship of God among the heathen, under different names, as expressed lines by a poet (Pope) :

Father of all! in every age,

In every clime adored,

By saint, by savage, and by sage,

Jehovah, Jove or Lord.

Canon S.D. Driver says on this passage, "It is a tribute to the truer and better side of heathen religion." It is no such thing. But why should it not be applied to this gospel age, in which among all nations His Name is known and called upon? There is a statement which excludes this interpretation: "and in every place incense shall be offered unto My Name, and a pure offering." The Romish Catholic Church uses this passage as one of her proof texts for that abomination, the Mass. In the canons of the Council of Trent we read that "the Mass is that pure sacrifice which the Lord predicted by Malachi should be offered to His Name in every place." Another prominent writer declares that it is "the bloodless sacrifice of the New Testament, the holy sacrifice of the mass." All this is Satanic invention. It is true the Name of the Lord is known among the nations, but no incense, sacrifice or offering is connected with the worship of the Lord in the true Church. For His heavenly people the earthly sacrifices and incense, offering and priesthood, are all passed; and more than that, these things would be inconsistent with their heavenly standing and calling. It will be different during the age to come, the Millennium. The last chapters of Ezekiel reveal the fact that with the millennial worship in the millennial temple incense and offerings are connected. The prophecy of the eleventh verse will be fulfilled during the millennium. Now His Name is not universally great among the Gentiles; it will be otherwise when the Lord Jesus Christ has come back.

Then follow additional expostulations on account of these conditions. In the second chapter the priests are again addressed. If they do not hear, do not lay it to heart, if their consciences are not aroused, to give glory unto His Name, He would curse their blessings; yea, they had been cursed already; He would punish

them severely for their contempt. Levi and the covenant with him is especially mentioned, on account of his faithfulness at the time when the golden calf had been set up by Israel in the wilderness, in contrast with Aaron who gave way to the demand of the people. But what a contrast between Levi and the priests in Malachi's day! For the priests' lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth, for he is the messenger of the Lord of Hosts. Such is the calling of the priest. But they had departed out of the way; they caused many to stumble at the law; they had corrupted the covenant of Levi. Therefore the Lord made them contemptible and base before all the people.

The Rebuke of the Social Conditions

Chapter 2:10-17

2:17-4:6. Prophecy of Messiah's advent

2:17. The occasion of the prophecy

The priests were corrupt, and with their bad example the people were likewise corrupt. It is the prophet who speaks in verse 10. The One Father was Jehovah, with whom the nation was in covenant relation. They had one Father, and they were one as a nation. By profaning that covenant they dealt treacherously every man against his brother. The abomination in social life, by which the covenant was profaned, and the holiness of the Lord outraged, was the marriage with the daughters of the heathen. They had put away their own Israelitish wives in order to enter into these unholy alliances. The Jew acted faithlessly toward his brother, both when he contracted a marriage with a heathen woman, and when he put away his legitimate wife, and thereby desecrated the covenant of the fathers, i.e., the covenant that Jehovah made with their fathers when He chose them to be a separated people. Those who have done this will surely be cut off. Malachi 2:13 describes the weeping and the tears of the abandoned Jewish wives; it is the same condition, only worse, which is recorded in Ezra and Nehemiah. All was an abomination unto the Lord. Over fifty years ago a writer called attention to the divorce evil in the United States. He wrote then:

The frequency of divorce in the United States, so that in one of the States divorce is allowed for "misconduct," reveals the same state of things existing now, as was here condemned by Jehovah, and must bring with it the same evils, and the same punishment. What tongue can adequately tell, what heart conceive, the untold misery from this cause, especially to the deserted wives, and the children left without a mother's care! How little is the indissoluble nature of the marriage relation regarded! and the fact, that the Lord was the witness of it, and

will be a swift witness against those who violate it! The Saviour only allows of one cause of divorce, and regards divorce for any other as adultery.

Since then this evil has increased a hundredfold or more among professing Christians, so that it threatens to undermine the home and all family life. It is the sign of the rapid disintegration of our nation.

And yet rebuked for these social conditions and wicked deeds, they could ask another, "Wherefore?" They were so hardened that they could not see why they were to blame. The difficult fifteenth verse refers to the marriage relation, in which God makes of twain one. He made the woman for man, though He had the residue of the Spirit, the creative power by which He might have made many women for one man. And wherefore one? that is, one woman for the man--that He might seek a godly seed, to perpetuate those who are godly, which is counteracted by divorce, such as they had practiced. It seemed as if the remnant who feared Him were being influenced by these corrupt practices, hence the warning. "Therefore take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously against the wife of his youth."

4. The Announcement of the Messenger and the Day of the Lord

The prophecy itself

Chapter 3:1-6

In this chapter and in the next we have the prophecies of Malachi as to the Messiah and His forerunner. The last verse of the preceding chapter belongs rightly to this chapter. "Ye have wearied the Lord with your words. Yet ye say, Wherein have we wearied Him? When ye say, Every one that doeth evil is good in the sight of the Lord, and He delighteth in them; or, Where is the God of judgment?" It is this last bold question, produced by their arrogant pride and self security which opens the way for the prophetic message in this chapter. "Where is the God of judgment?" The answer is, "Behold, I will send My messenger, and he shall prepare the way before Me; and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to His temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in; behold, He shall come, saith the Lord of hosts." The first announcement of the messenger, who goes before the Lord, is quoted in Matthew 11:10; Mark 1:22; Luke 1:76; Luke 7:27. Isaiah, too, had spoken a similar prophecy in Isaiah 40:3. This prophecy was fulfilled in the person of John the Baptist, as the herald of His first coming; still this prophecy considered in the light of the prophecy in the next chapter, concerning the coming of Elijah, remains yet to be fully accomplished. John the Baptist was not Elijah; Elijah is

still to come and do his work preceding the coming of the Lord. The messenger is followed by the Lord, the Messenger, or Angel (the meaning of the Hebrew word) of the Covenant. The word Lord is here the word Adon with the article, always used of God. It is the Lord God who comes, and His official title is “The Angel of the Covenant.” Many expositors have blundered here in that they imagined the word covenant means the new covenant of which the Lord Jesus is the Mediator Hebrews 9:15. But it is not the truth. The Messenger of the Covenant is the same “Angel of the Lord” who appeared frequently in Israel’s past history, and generally in the form of a human being. The Angel of the Lord is the Son of God in His pre-incarnation manifestations, and He is announced here as the Angel of the Covenant. The nation believed in His coming, and in the question “Where is the God of judgment?” they had asked for Him. That there was a partial fulfillment of this prophecy when our Lord, the Messiah of Israel, came unexpectedly in the temple, must not be overlooked, but that it was the fulfillment of these words is not true. It will be accomplished in the day of His Return, preceded by another messenger. Their question “Where is the God of judgment?” will then be fully answered, and what it will be we read in the next two verses (Malachi 3:2 and Malachi 3:3). He will purge the nation of the dross, beginning with the sons of Levi. It is the same as in Zechariah 13:9. John the Baptist announced the same also, and when he gave his inspired testimony of the purging of the threshing floor and the burning of the chaff with unquenchable fire Matthew 3:12 he referred not to the first coming of Christ, but to His second coming.

As the result of this judgment in store for the nation, when the sorcerers, the adulterers, the false swearers, and the oppressors will be dealt with, we read in the fourth verse (Malachi 3:4) “Then shall the offering of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant unto the Lord, as in the days of old, and as in former years.”

Verses 7-12. The people’s sin of robbing God

Rebuke for Defrauding The Lord

Chapter 3:7-15

Another rebuke is administered. They were always a stiff-necked people, never obedient to His ordinances. His gracious call to return unto Him, and the promise that He will return unto them is answered by “Wherein shall we return?” They had robbed God of what was His right. The tithes and offerings which He demanded in the law covenant had been withheld. On account of it the blessing was lacking and curse was upon the nation. Then follows a command to bring all the tithes into the storehouse, the challenge to prove Him, the assurance

of abundant blessing. It is strange that even those who have a good knowledge of truth, the dispensations and the heavenly position of a Christian, should fall back upon this verse and claim that it is binding and should be practiced among believers. For a system like Seventh Day Adventism, a system which has perverted the gospel of grace, which denies God's oath-bound covenants with Israel, which claims to be the true Israel, the system to which applies the term "the synagogue of Satan, who say that they are Jews and are not; " for such a cult to make this command a binding law is not surprising. But well taught believers should never look upon this passage as in any way in force today. True Christian giving, like everything else in the life and service of a true believer, must be done, not by law but through grace, under the direction of the Holy Spirit. Nowhere in the New Testament is there anything said about tithing. A believer must be a cheerful giver, giving as the Lord has prospered him, communicating to others, doing good, remembering the poor, ministering in temporal things to those who minister in spiritual things; but all this giving must be under the direction of the Spirit of God.

The day will come when His earthly people will minister to the wants of the Lord's house (a Jewish term), so that there will be an abundant supply for sacrifices. That will be in the future day of their restoration, when the devourer will be rebuked (Malachi 3:11). It is at that time, when the millennium has come, that all nations will call them blessed, when they shall be a delightful land Isaiah 62:4. This has never been since it was written by the pen of Malachi.

3:13- 4:3. The people's sin of criticising the Lord

The Remnant and the Concluding Prophecy

Chapter 3:16-4:6

In the midst of all these moral conditions, the apostasy of the masses, we find a pleasing picture of a godly portion, whom the Lord mentions in a special manner. There were those who feared the Lord. They had no sympathy with the wicked practices of their brethren; they did not share the contempt and unbelief manifested by the rank and file of the people. They were drawn together by the Spirit of God; they had fellowship one with another. They came together to think upon His Name, to honour Him, to read His Word, to call unto the Lord. And the Lord heard; He was pleased with them, and He is represented as recording their names in the Book of Remembrance, the bookkeeping in glory Psalms 56:8. He has a special promise for such. "And they shall be Mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up My jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him."

Such a remnant of godly ones was in existence in Malachi's day, and when they passed away others took their places. The Lord preserved such a godly seed in every generation throughout the four hundred silent years. And when that silence was broken, by the Angel's message to the ministering priest Zechariah, we see such a remnant on the threshold of the New Testament. Good old Anna and Simeon, the shepherds and others belonged to this waiting, God-fearing remnant. And so it will be before His second coming. A similar remnant will then be on earth awaiting His glorious return.

It is so in Christendom. Departure from the faith soon manifested itself in the professing church. Decline followed decline, till the awful Romish apostasy was consummated. But in every generation the Lord kept a people separated unto Himself. The Reformation came, followed by revivals and recovery of truth. But the Spirit of God does not predict that this age ends in universal acceptance of the truth and universal righteousness and peace, but He predicts a universal apostasy. But even then He has a remnant true to Him. That remnant is seen prophetically in the Church message to Philadelphia Revelation 3:1-22.

In the fourth chapter is the final message of the Old Testament Prophetic Word. The day, that coming day of the Lord, so often mentioned in every portion of the Old Testament, is once more brought before us. It is the day of fire, the day of reckoning with the wicked, who will be consumed like stubble. But that day brings not only the fire of judgment, the winding up of "man's day," the dethronement of evil, but it will be the day of the sunrise. "The Sun of Righteousness shall arise with healing in His wings." The Sun of Righteousness is the Lord Jesus Christ. It is the beautiful symbol of His personal, visible, and glorious coming to usher in that day, which will last for a thousand years, in which He will rule in power and glory. The Old Testament knows nothing of His coming as the Morning Star. That coming is exclusively revealed in the New Testament in relation with the Church. The Morning Star precedes the sunrise. Even so, before that day comes, before the great tribulation, with wrath poured out, He comes for His saints as the Morning Star. The Church does not wait for the rising of the sun, but for the rising of the Morning Star. While the world sleeps, and the world-church dreams its idle dreams, true believers look for the Morning Star. Some day we shall see that glorious Morning Star, when suddenly He descends with that long promised shout.

When the Sun of Righteousness arises, He will bring healing and blessing. His waiting earthly people, the remnant, will be filled with joy and gambol as calves, while the wicked will be trodden under foot.

The whole chapter is a future prophecy. While there has been a partial fulfilment of the first verse of the third chapter, everything in this concluding chapter awaits its fulfilment. Elijah the prophet is announced. John the Baptist came in the Spirit and power of Elijah, but he was not the Elijah promised here. If ye will receive it, said our Lord, this is Elijah who should come. It was a testimony to faith and not the fulfilment of Malachi's prophecy. If the Jews had accepted Christ, John would have been Elijah. Our Lord bears witness to this. "Elias truly shall come first and restore all things. But I say unto you, That Elias is come already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed. Likewise shall also the Son of man suffer of them." When the age closes another one will appear, the Elijah announced by Malachi, who does his work of restoration before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. His work will be carried on among the people Israel. Deceivers and impostors have occasionally arisen who claimed to be this Elijah; the most prominent in recent years is the Dowieite delusion of Zion City. Such is the havoc produced by not dividing the Word of Truth rightly.

4:4-6. Concluding warning

The close of the Old Testament prophetic Word is majestically solemn. In the beginning of the Old Testament stands written the sin and the curse which came upon the race through the fall of man. The final testimony in Malachi speaks of Him who comes to take the curse upon Himself, the promised Christ; who comes to deal with the wicked, who comes to bless and to remove that curse. The New Testament which follows tells us of Him and of His matchless work, the fullness of redemption and the all-sufficiency of Grace. And the final New Testament book shows the consummation, the coming judgments, the righteous judgments of the Lord, and the fulfillment of all "which was spoken by His holy prophets;" ending with the great words, "Surely I come quickly! Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus!"

Prophecy in Malachi – Jewish and Messianic

The contents of the book are comprised in four chapters. In the Hebrew text the third and fourth chapters (of the A.V.) form but one. The whole consists of three sections, preceded by an introduction (Mal. 1:1-5), in which the prophet reminds Israel of Jehovah's love to them. The first section (1:6-2:9) contains a stern rebuke addressed to the priests who had despised the name of Jehovah, and been leaders in a departure from his worship and from the covenant, and for their partiality in administering the law. In the second (2:9-16) the people are rebuked for their intermarriages with idolatrous heathen. In the third (2:17-4:6) he

addresses the people as a whole, and warns them of the coming of the God of judgment, preceded by the advent of the Messiah. This book is frequently referred to in the New Testament (Matt. 11:10; 17:12; Mark 1:2; 9:11, 12; Luke 1:17; Rom. 9:13).

Jewish

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Introduction

God communicated to people through prophecy for nearly the entire biblical period, from Adam until Malachi. According to a prevalent Jewish tradition, prophecy ceased with Malachi, not to be renewed until the messianic age. In this article, we will consider a few traditional explanations of why prophecy ceased and some spiritual implications for Judaism over the ensuing 2,500 years and counting.

Overview of Malachi

Unlike Haggai and Zechariah, whose prophecies pulsed with messianic potential, Malachi lived a generation or two later—a generation in which that messianic potential appears to have been lost. At that time, the people's political and economic suffering contributed to:

their feelings of rejection by God (1:2–5),
corruption of the priesthood (1:6–2:9),
rampant intermarriage (2:10–16), and
laxity in tithing (3:8–12).

God-fearing people were losing heart as well. Why remain righteous? Their sinful compatriots were successful, while God-fearing people suffered (2:17; 3:13–21)! All Malachi could answer was that for now, the mere fact of Israel's continued existence proved that God still loved them (1:2–5). Only in some unspecified future would God bring complete justice (3:13–24).

According to a prevalent Jewish tradition, Malachi was the last prophet (see, for example, *Tosefta Sotah* 3:3; *Yoma* 9b; *Sanhedrin* 11a). That his book is positioned last in the Twelve Prophets does not prove he was the last prophet, since the book is not arranged in chronological order. However, it seems from textual evidence that he likely was the last of the Twelve. Radak and Abarbanel

observe that unlike Haggai and Zechariah, Malachi does not mention the Temple construction; it was in use already. Malachi also condemns intermarriage (Mal. 2:10–16), a shared concern of Ezra and Nehemiah (458–432 B.C.E., see Ezra 9–10; Neh. 13:23–28). The widespread laxity in tithing (Mal. 3:8–12) also likely dates to Nehemiah’s time (Neh. 10:35–40; 12:44; 13:5, 10–12).

Even if Malachi were the last of the biblical prophets, there is no statement at the end of his book or anywhere else in the Bible stating categorically that prophecy had ceased. For example, Nehemiah battled false prophets (Neh. 6:5–7, 11–13) but did not negate the existence of prophecy in principle.

Nevertheless, the tradition that Malachi was the last prophet opened the interpretive possibility that Malachi was *conscious* of the impending end of prophecy.

A pronouncement (*massa*): The word of the Lord to Israel through Malachi (Mal. 1:1).

Most commentators understand the book’s opening word *massa* as another generic term for “prophecy.” However, Abarbanel notes that the term could also mean “burden.” One Midrash similarly understands *massa* in this vein:

- [Prophecy] is expressed by ten designations...And which is the severest form? ... The Rabbis said: Burden (*massa*), as it says, As a heavy burden (Ps. 138:5) (*Gen. Rabbah* 44:6).

Within this interpretation, it is possible that Malachi viewed his mission with additional weight, conscious of his being the last of the prophets.

Similarly, several interpreters understand the book’s closing verses as a self-conscious expression that prophecy was about to end:

Be mindful of the Teaching of My servant Moses, whom I charged at Horeb with laws and rules for all Israel. Lo, I will send the prophet Elijah to you before the coming of the awesome, fearful day of the Lord. He shall reconcile parents with children and children with their parents, so that, when I come, I do not strike the whole land with utter destruction (Mal. 3:22–24).

Kara (on 3:22), Ibn Ezra (on 1:1), Abarbanel (on 1:1), and Malbim (on 3:22) explain that Malachi was aware that prophecy would stop with him. The word of God would henceforth be available only through the written word of the Bible. Malbim links the exhortation to observe the Torah to the prediction of Elijah’s coming. With the end of prophecy, the Torah would sustain the people of Israel until the messianic era, at which point prophecy will resume.

Why Prophecy Stopped

We now turn to three leading trends in traditional Jewish thought as to why prophecy ceased: sin, the destruction of the Temple, or a metaphysical spiritual transition.

Sin

Some sources suggest that the loss of prophecy was punishment for sin. Over 200 years before Malachi, the prophet Amos predicted the cessation of prophecy:

A time is coming—declares my Lord God—when I will send a famine upon the land: not a hunger for bread or a thirst for water, but for hearing the words of the Lord. Men shall wander from sea to sea and from north to east to seek the word of the Lord, but they shall not find it (Amos 8:11–12).

Avot D'Rabbi Nathan B:47 explains that prophecy ceased as a consequence of people mocking the prophets.

Radak (on Hag. 2:5) suggests more generally that lack of fidelity to the Torah resulted in the loss of prophecy. A Midrash (*Pesikta Rabbati* 35) states that many Jews failed to return to Israel after Cyrus gave them permission, and therefore prophecy ceased. Commenting on *Yoma* 9b, which blames the lack of redemption in the Second Temple period on the fact that many Jews did not return, Maharsha similarly states that prophecy ceased as punishment for the non-return from exile.

Destruction of the Temple

Ezekiel chapters 8–10 describe a vision wherein God shows the prophet the rampant idolatry in Jerusalem. God's Presence abandons the Temple and goes into exile. Radak (on Ezek. 9:3) explains that the absence of God's Presence ultimately contributed to the disappearance of prophecy.

Although Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi prophesied after the destruction of the First Temple, a number of sources consider the destruction to have dealt a fatal blow to prophecy.

?In five things the first Sanctuary differed from the second: in the ark, the ark-cover, the Cherubim, the fire, the Shekhinah, the Holy Spirit [of Prophecy], and the *Urim ve-Thummim* [the Oracle Plate] (*Yoma* 21b).

As Benjamin is the last tribe, so Jeremiah is the last prophet. But did not Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi prophesy after him? R. Lazar says: they had limited prophecy. R. Samuel b. Nahman says: [Jeremiah's] prophecy already was given to Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi (*Pesikta D'Rav Kahana* 13).

The last prophets were diminished or, alternatively, were mere transmitters of Jeremiah's message. Malbim (on Zech. 1:5–6) presents a more benign form of this approach:

I will not send new prophets, since there is no longer any need for prophets as you have seen all the prophecies of doom fulfilled against you...there is no longer any need for prophecy since you already understand God's hand in history.

According to Malbim, there no longer was any need for prophecy since the message had already been given through earlier prophets.

Metaphysical Transition

*Seder Olam Rabbah*³⁰ states that prophecy ceased in the time of Alexander the Great. Based on the rabbinic chronology, the Greek Empire began immediately following the end of the biblical period, so this time frame would synchronize with Malachi. Following this chronological assumption, R. Zadok HaKohen of Lublin observed that a metaphysical transition to an age of reason occurred in Israel and in Greece at the same time:

The proliferation of idolatry and sorcery in the gentile world paralleled divine revelation and prophecy in Israel. When prophecy ceased and the era of the Oral Law commenced, there appeared Greek Philosophy, which is to say, mortal wisdom (*Resisei Laylah*, 81b, Bezalel Naor translation).

This idea meshes with a talmudic statement that at the beginning of the Second Temple period, the temptation for idolatry ceased being the force it had been during the First Temple period (*Yoma* 69b). R. Yehudah HeHasid argued that once the urge for idolatry vanished there no longer existed the need for prophecy to counterbalance magic (*Sefer Hasidim*, Wistenetzky ed., p. 544; cf. R. Elijah of Vilna, commentary on *Seder Olam Rabbah* 30; R. Zadok, *Divrei Soferim*, 21b).

Similarly, a certain spiritual intensity was lost. Once the urge to idolatry had declined, prophetic revelation would have too much power if left unchecked. To preserve free will, prophecy had to cease as well (R. Eliyahu Dessler, *Mikhtav me-Eliyahu* III, pp. 277–278).

Religious Implications

According to the sin approach, the deprivation of the supreme gift of prophecy was a devastating punishment that has diminished the connection between God and humanity for the past 2,500 years since Malachi. Within the destruction of the Temple approach, the disappearance of prophecy was a necessary corollary of that cataclysmic event.

Although the loss of prophecy was a spiritual catastrophe, there still are some spiritual benefits to its suspension particularly within the approach that there was a divinely ordained metaphysical shift from prophecy-idolatry to human reason. In 1985, Professor Yaakov Elman published two articles analyzing the position of R. Zadok HaKohen of Lublin in reference to the transition from the age of prophecy to the age of Oral Law. According to R. Zadok, the end of prophecy facilitated a flourishing of the development of the Oral Law, a step impossible as long as people could turn to the prophets for absolute religious guidance and knowledge of God's Will. Sages needed to interpret texts and traditions to arrive at rulings, enabling them to develop axioms that could keep the eternal Torah relevant as society changed.

Although the decline of revelation distanced people from ascertaining God's Will, it simultaneously enabled mature human participation in the mutual covenant between God and humanity. This religious struggle is captured poignantly by the talmudic passage:

And they stood under the mount: R. Abdimi b. Hama b. Hasa said: This teaches that the Holy One, blessed be He, overturned the mountain upon them like an [inverted] cask, and said to them, 'If you accept the Torah, it is well; if not, there shall be your burial.' R. Aha b. Jacob observed: This furnishes a strong protest against the Torah. Said Rava, Yet even so, they re-accepted it in the days of Ahasuerus, for it is written, [the Jews] confirmed, and took upon them [etc.]: [i.e.,] they confirmed what they had accepted long before (*Shabbat* 88a).

Rather than explaining R. Aha's question away, Rava understood that revelation in fact crippled an aspect of free will. He proposed Purim as the antidote, since that represents the age when revelation ceased.

Although prophecy was the ideal state—and we pray for its return—its absence enables the flourishing of human reason, as we no longer have access to absolute divine knowledge. We must take initiative in our relationship with God or else the relationship suffers. R. Zadok applied this human endeavor to the realm of Torah study. Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik understood prayer as replacing prophecy, precisely with the imperative of our responsibility to keep the lines of communication between God and humanity open:

In short, prayer and prophecy are two synonymous designations of the covenantal God-man colloquy. Indeed, the prayer community was born the very instant the prophetic community expired and, when it did come into the spiritual world of the Jew of old, it did not supersede the prophetic community but rather perpetuated it...If God had stopped calling man, they urged, let man call God (*The Lonely Man of Faith* [New York: Doubleday, 1992], pp. 57–58).

Institutionalizing prayer rescued intimacy with God by creating a new framework for this sacred dialogue.

Although prophecy disappeared some 2,500 years ago, the underlying spiritual struggle continues to be manifest in contemporary society. Many people long for absolute knowledge of God's Will. Consequently, there exists a compelling pull toward holy men (*rebbes*, kabbalists) or the over-extension of a *da'at Torah* concept that accords near-infallibility to Torah scholars. Though that appeal may be understandable, it must be remembered that (a) these individuals are not prophets and therefore do not have the certain divine knowledge that many accord to them; and (b) in an age lacking prophecy we have a far greater responsibility to learn Torah and pray, and to take that spiritual energy to infuse every aspect of our lives with sanctity. This requires a healthy dose of human reason and effort, coupled with an ongoing consultation with spiritual guides who can help us grow.

Christian Bible

The name Malachi comes from the Hebrew word Malaki meaning, "God's messenger". He was the last of the Old Testament prophets. Malachi ministered to Judah from c. 465-425 BC. The prophecies of Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi spanned an era from c. 520-425 BC.

Nehemiah had finished leading the people of Judah to complete the walls of Jerusalem after their return from captivity. But their hearts again turned away from God. Everyone including the priests had become callous toward God and His commandments. Their worship was a meaningless ritual and they had robbed God by not tithing and giving offerings. They considered their evil to be Godliness and they divorced their wives without shame. God appealed to them to consider their ways and return to Him for blessings.

God's people refused to listen. As a result, God would remain silent after Malachi. Malachi prophesied that God would send another messenger who would prepare the way for God to reach His people. This prophet came as John the Baptist more than 400 years later. John prepared the way for *Jesus Christ, the Messiah*. *Christ* would come to bring good news to the world and enter into His temple. These prophecies were fulfilled at the first coming of *Christ*. Malachi also prophesied the end of days when another prophet, Elijah, would prepare the way for the great day of the Lord. *Christ* would bring a remnant of Israel to repentance and judge all the nations for their evil. The priests of Levi would be purified and the wicked would be consumed by fire.

Malachi 1-3: The sins of the people and the priests; God's appeal to them for repentance

Malachi 3: God's promises to those who fear Him

Malachi 4: The coming of Elijah; the great day of the Lord; judgments and rewards

Jesus Fulfilled the Prophet Malachi's awesome Prophecy of the Tzit-Tzit

"But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings," Malachi 4:2

According to Jewish sages and tradition, this Sun of Righteousness referred to in Malachi's prophecy was understood to be the Messiah, who would have the power to heal who ever touched the tzit-tzit (fringes) on his garment.

In Jesus' day, Jewish men wore a simple tunic both at home and at work. When appearing in public, they would cover their tunic with a large rectangular cloth which draped over the shoulder and fell to the ankles. This cloth was called a tallit and served as protection from cold and rain. Hanging from the end of each of its four corners (wings) was a tzitzit in obedience to the biblical command. The hem of this garment is actually made with fringes, or tassels (called tzitziyot, in Hebrew). These were required to be on the four corners of all clothing of Jewish men, in accordance with God's instruction. These tassels were to remind each Jewish man of his responsibility to fulfill God's commandments in Deuteronomy 22 :12 and Num.15:37-40. In fact, these tassels are tied into 613 knots to constantly remind Jewish men of the 613 laws of Moses, of which there are 365 prohibitions (The "thou shalt not" laws), and 248 affirmations (the "thou shall" laws). The knots also correspond with the ineffable name of God, the unspoken yod-hey-vav-hey, Yahweh.

The fulfilment of this prophecy by Jesus:

One of the best known miracles of healing that Jesus performed was the occasion when a woman who had suffered from a hemorrhage for twelve years came up behind him and touched the hem of his garment. Both Matthew and Mark tell us about this incident below. Mark further tells us, that wherever the Lord went whomever merely touched the border of his garment "were made whole".

Matthew 9:20-22

20 And, behold, a woman, which was diseased with an issue of blood twelve years, came behind him, and touched the hem of his garment: For she said within herself, If I may but touch his garment, I shall be whole. But Jesus turned

him about, and when he saw her, he said, Daughter, be of good comfort; thy faith hath made thee whole. And the woman was made whole from that hour.

She was expressing her faith in Jesus as the Son of Righteousness with healing in His wings.

Mark 5:25-34

And a certain woman, which had an issue of blood twelve years, And had suffered many things of many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse, When she had heard of Jesus, came in the press behind, and touched his garment. For she said, If I may touch but his clothes, I shall be whole. And straightway the fountain of her blood was dried up; and she felt in her body that she was healed of that plague. And Jesus, immediately knowing in himself that virtue had gone out of him, turned him about in the press, and said, Who touched my clothes? And his disciples said unto him, Thou seest the multitude thronging thee, and sayest thou, Who touched me? And he looked round about to see her that had done this thing. But the woman fearing and trembling, knowing what was done in her, came and fell down before him, and told him all the truth. And he said unto her, Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace, and be whole of thy plague.

Mark 6:56

And whithersoever he entered, into villages, or cities, or country, they laid the sick in the streets, and besought him that they might touch if it were but the border of his garment: and as many as touched him were made whole.

Message for today

We have to ask ourselves if these conditions characterize the prevalent spiritual condition of the Christian world today. It should not stretch our imagination to see similar behavioral trends in vogue, especially among people of the Western world. We claim to be “Christian,” but are indifferent and calloused toward God and His inspired Word—His revelation to man. Few take notice of biblical teachings and how they apply to their daily lives.

Malachi was inspired to carry his message forward to the end of the age, and he makes reference to the return of Christ (1:11; 3:1-6, 16-18; 4:1-6). He calls it “the day” (3:2, 17; 4:1, 3, 5). Out of love, God calls for us to repent; and He gives a stern warning to all, including those living at the end time.

It behooves all people to heed the warnings so that they will be “worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man” (Luke 21:36). Unless Christ intervenes in the affairs of humanity, the world would end “with a curse” or utter destruction (Malachi 4:6; see also Matthew 24:22). The whole process that eventually leads to the lake of fire (Malachi 4:1) begins with the people not responding to the love of God (1:2-3).

Yet some do respond to God. “A book of remembrance” is written for those God calls “My jewels,” and He promises to spare them as His own children. Why this special category of people as opposed to the many who reject Him? The book of Malachi lists several reasons (3:16-18):

1. They “feared the LORD”—honoured, esteemed, respected and obeyed Him.
2. They “spoke to one another,” showing the importance of fellowshiping with people of like mind.
3. They “meditate on His name”—study and think about the Bible to come to a greater understanding of God and His purpose for mankind. Their lives took on a different purpose and meaning. Hope replaced despair, and truth replaced error.
4. They served Him, showing a willingness to obey God and to seek His Kingdom and righteousness as a first priority in their lives (Matthew 6:33).

The book of remembrance is mentioned as an encouragement to those faithful to God, since He needs no book of records to remember or recollect names.

Messianic Prophecy in Malachi Chapter Three

The context of **Malachi’s prophecy**, which the Father says is **Messianic** in order for the Mystery of the Communion to be fully understood. **Malachi** opens the **prophecy** by speaking about the Messenger or Ambassador who would **prepare** the way of the Lord. The usage of word “prepare” shows that the **Messenger** John the Baptist, would turn back the people to God or to repent of their sins, cause Israel to look to God.

The suddenness of **Messiah’s** appearance to His earthly Temple reminds me of Apostle Paul’s prophecy of another future appearance when *the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night* (1 Thessalonians 5: 2):

Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the LORD of hosts – Malachi 3: 1.

Malachi further prophesied that John would come in the Spirit of Elijah or behaving like Elijah before the *great and dreadful day of the LORD*:

Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD – Malachi 4: 5.

Prophet Isaiah also prophesied about the Messenger who would prepare the way of the Lord. Isaiah used also used “panah” (prepare) to mean prepare or repent as well as “yashar” ,a verb that indicated that the one crying in the wilderness would *command Israel to please God, to walk uprightly and to do good.*

Yashar is added for emphasis and its usage in scripture shows that Israel was in a deplorable spiritual and moral decline at the time of the Messiah’s appearance.

Prophet John fulfilled his calling of the **Messiah’s** forerunner during the time of his ministry. This is why Jesus said that there was no one greater in the Kingdom of Heaven than John the Baptist::

*The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, **Prepare ye the way of the LORD**, make straight (yashar) in the desert a highway for our God (Isaiah 40: 3).*

2. Prophet Malachi revealed that Messiah would suddenly appear even while John His Ambassador preached repentance to the nation of Israel

Prophet **Malachi** warned Israel that the Lord, the Messenger of the Covenant, would suddenly appear in His temple during the ministry of His Ambassador:

*... the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the **messenger** of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the LORD of hosts – Malachi 3: 1.*

The Prophet referred to Lord Jesus as the **Messenger of the Covenant**. There are direct references in scripture to Covenants (Leagues or Confederacies) that God made with humans. Was the Prophet referring to the Covenant that God made with Abraham to be their God and that they would be His people? Is the Prophet referring to the Covenant made with Moses in Sinai? Is God speaking about the New Covenant of salvation through the Blood of Jesus?

To my mind, exclusiveness lies at the core of any covenant that God made with humans in scripture. In the Covenants, He exclusively Promises to be the God of

those who will exclusively serve Him. However, Israel continued to break this covenant with God.

3. Prophet Malachi warned that the nation would not be able to abide the Day of Messiah's coming because He would be indignant at the corruption of the Temple

Prophet Malachi warned that Israel would not be able to *abide* the day of Messiah's coming, because He would appear in the temple with Spirit of Cleansing. *Abide* in the scriptures is used to mean *nourish, feed, contain, sustain*.

Aided with the benefit of hindsight, I believe that the Prophet referred to the **indignation** (Jeremiah 10: 10) of the **Messiah** as He dealt with the spiritual condition of the religious leaders. **Messiah** would pour out the Word of God that had been shut up in His bones since childhood and would **reprove** them (Jeremiah 20: 9). He could not **hold in** His indignation as He witnessed the deplorable situation (Jeremiah 6: 11). **Messiah** was so holy that the earthly temple could neither **receive nor contain** His righteousness. The standard was too low for the Lord.

Messiah had come to restore, to nourish, to feed the people with spiritual food. Instead, however, He met a nation and religious system in which the people practiced sorcery, adultery, false swearers and oppressors. Elders in the church should follow **Messiah's** response to sin in the church. I concluded that **Prophet Malachi** revealed that hatred and anger for the exposure of their hypocrisy lay at the root of Jesus' crucifixion. Rather than repenting, the leaders hatred rose daily to fever pitch:

But who may abide the day of his coming? And who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' (kabac/H3526) soap – Malachi 3: 2

*But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot **contain** thee; how much less this house that I have builded? – 1 Kings 8: 27.*

*... the brasen altar that was before the LORD was too little to **receive** the burnt offerings, and meat offerings, and the fat of the peace offerings. – 1 Kings 8: 64*

*For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can **hold** no water – Jeremiah 2: 13*

*Therefore I am full of the fury of the LORD; I am weary with **holding in**: I will pour it out upon the children abroad... – Jeremiah 6: 11*

*But the LORD is the true God, he is the living God, and an everlasting king: at his wrath the earth shall tremble, and the nations shall not be able to **abide** his indignation – Jeremiah 10: 10*

*... for the day of the LORD is great and very terrible; and who can **abide** it? – Joel 2: 11*

4. What is the Day of His Coming?

Prophet Malachi said that Israel would not be able to abide the Day of the Lord's Coming. I believe that *The Day of His Coming* referred to the three-year period of His Ministry. It therefore began when John introduced Jesus as the Lamb of God and ended when He ascended to heaven.

Since the word *day* (*yowm*) occurs thousands of times in scripture, I searched blueletterbible.org for *The Day of the Lord* and discovered that Malachi further prophesied that the time of the Lord's ministry would be a *great and dreadful day*... (*Malachi 4: 5*). It would be dreadful because the scriptures reveal that He was acerbic and sharp in the rebuke of the *Scribes and Pharisees*. *He spared no one from His wrath*.

The *Day of the Lord* is one of **His visitation** and must be interpreted in each context in which it is given. In **Malachi 3**, the Day of the Lord referred to His appearance in the earth in human form to preach the Gospel of the Kingdom and to save the people from their sins.

These are common themes in scriptures about the *Day of the Lord*:

- *the proud will be humiliated – Isaiah 2: 12/*
- *destruction – Isaiah 13: 6; Joel 1: 15*
- *wrath, fierce anger, desolation of the land and destruction of sinners – Isaiah 13: 9*
- *a time in which the Lord executes vengeance against His adversaries, as in the destruction of Pharaoh. In that day, the reward of the heathen will return on their heads – Jeremiah 46: 10; Obadiah 1: 15;*
- *the Lord fights against His enemies – Ezekiel 13: 5*
- *time of the heathen or destruction of those who rage against God – Ezekiel 30: 3*
- *Solar and lunar eclipses – Joel 2: 31*
- *a time of decision – Joel 3: 14*

- *a day of darkness over the earth, like the darkness in Egypt and the three-hour period of darkness over Israel at the time of time of the crucifixion of the Lord – Amos 5: 18 & 20.*
- *bitter crying of the mighty men of the earth – Zephaniah 1: 14*
- *a day when the people of God will divide the spoils of battle, like Jehoshaphat and the nation did after God killed the armies that came against them. In other words, His people will inherit the wealth of the heathen by Divine Transfer – Zechariah 14: 1*
- *the day when the earth shall be judged – 1 Corinthians 5: 5*
- *Judgement of the earth in which the “elements of the earth will melt with fervent heat.” This speaks of the era in which we live. Glaciers are melting and the earth is experiencing climatic disruptions due to Global Warming – 2 Peter 3: 10*

From Malachi to Matthew History

As to reader turns from Malachi, the last book of the Old Testament, to the opening pages of the Gospel of Matthew in the New Testament he immediately becomes aware of an altogether different environment. It is as though a new world has been entered.

The Inter-testament Period

We would not say that a knowledge of the period between the Old and New Testaments is vital to one's understanding of the four Gospels, but it is very desirable, and indeed quite necessary if we would fully appreciate many of the scenes and incidents on which Matthew lifts the curtain. It gives a background against which we see with clearness the connections and relevance of the sayings and doing which occupy the earlier pages of our New Testament.

The Entire Period

With the Old Testament canon closing with Malachi at about 397 B.C., we see that this period between Malachi and Matthew covers some four hundred years. This four hundred year interval has been called "the dark period" of Israel's history in pre-Christian times, because during it there was neither prophet nor inspired writer. With this period we seem to find the sad fulfilment of Psalm 74:9 upon Israel: "We see not our signs; there is no more any prophet; neither is there among us any that knoweth how long."

The condition of the Jews as a nation and race at the beginning of this four-hundred-year period should be kept in mind. Two hundred years earlier

Jerusalem had been overthrown and the Jewish people carried into the Babylonian exile (606 B.C. - 586 B.C.) as punishment for their unfaithfulness to God. At the end of this 70 year punishment period, the Babylonian empire having been overthrown and succeeded by that of Media-Persia (536 B.C.), Cyrus, the Persian emperor, issued a decree permitting the return of the Jews to Israel. Under the leadership of Zerubbabel, some fifth thousand Jews returned. Some twenty years after their return, after many setbacks, the building of the Temple was completed in 516 B.C. Then after another 58 years had past, in 458 B.C., Ezra the scribe returned to Jerusalem with a small group of Israelites and restored the Law and the ritual. Still another 13 years later, in 445 B.C., Nehemiah had come to Jerusalem to rebuild the walls and become governor. Now, once again, there was a Jewish state in Judea, though of course under Persian rule.

Such, then is the picture of the Jewish people at the beginning of the four-hundred-year period between Malachi and Matthew: the Jewish Remnant back in Judea for about one hundred and forty years (536 B.C. - 397 B.C.); a small, dependent Jewish state there; Jerusalem and the temple rebuilt; The Law and the ritual restored; but with the mass of the people remaining dispersed through-out the Media-Persian empire.

The Political Development

Now, if we are to appreciate this Jewish community as it re-emerges in the pages of the New Testament, we need look at their political development as well as their religious development. Viewed politically, the varying course of the Jewish nation in Palestine simple reflects the history of the different world-empires which ruled Palestine. The one exception to this was the Maccabean revolt, which resulted for a short period of time in there being an independent Jewish government.

Jewish history during those four centuries between the Testaments runs in six periods:

the Persian,
the Greek,
the Egyptian,
the Syrian,
the Maccabean and
the Roman.

I. The Persian Period (536-333 B.C.)

The Persian rule over Palestine, which commenced with the decree of Cyrus in 536 B.C. for the return of the Jewish Remnant, continued until 333 B.C., when Palestine fell under the power of Alexander the Great (the third of the Gentile world-empires foretold by Daniel). This means that at the end of Malachi the Jews were still under Persian rule, and remained so for about the first sixty years of the inter-Testament period.

Persian rule seems to have been tolerant. The high priest form of Jewish government was respected with the high priest being given an increasing degree of civil power in addition to his religious offices, though of course he was responsible to the Persian governor of Syria.

2. The Greek Period (333-323 B.C.)

Alexander the Great is a phenomenon in history. Catapulted into leadership through the assassination of his father when he, Alexander, was but twenty years of age, he transformed the face of the world, politically, in little more than a decade. He is the "notable horn" in the "he-goat" vision of Daniel (Daniel 8:1-7).

In his march on Jerusalem, he not only spared the city, but also offered sacrifice to Jehovah and had the prophecies of Daniel read to him concerning the overthrow of the Persian empire by a king of Grecia, (Daniel 8:21.) Thereafter he treated the Jews with respect and gave them full rights of citizenship with the Greeks in his new city, Alexandria, and in other cities. This in return, created decidedly pro-Greek sympathies among the Jews, and, along with Alexander's spreading of the Greek language and civilization, a Hellenistic spirit developed among the Jews which greatly affected their mental outlook afterward.

3. The Egyptian Period (323-204 B.C.)

This is the longest of the six periods of the inter-Testament period. The death of Alexander resulted in a period of time of confusion which was resolved by a four-fold break-up of Alexander's empire under four generals: Ptolemy, Lysimachus, Cassander and Selenus. These are the four "notable ones" which take the place of the "great horn," as predicted in Daniel 8:21,22.

After severe fighting, Judea, along with the rest of Syria fell to Ptolemy Soter, the first of the Greek kings to rule over Egypt. The beginning of the Ptolemaic

dynasty.

For a time Ptolemy Soter dealt harshly with the Jews, but afterwards became just as friendly. His successor, Ptolemy Philadelphus, continued this favorable attitude. His reign is notable in that the famous Septuagint translation of the Old Testament Scriptures was made from the Hebrew onto the Greek language. We see the importance of this when we realize that the Greek language had now become the language of the civilized world. The Jews were so numerous in Egypt and North Africa that such a translation had become a necessity. The Septuagint came into general use well before the birth of Jesus and was still in use during the time Jesus was on earth and was quoted by Jesus.

4. The Syrian Period (204-165 B.C.)

When Ptolemy Philopater (fourth Ptolemy) died, his successor, Ptolemy Epiphanes, was only five years old. Antiochus the Great seized his opportunity and in 204 B.C. invaded Egypt. Judea, with other territories, soon after became annexed to Syria and so passed under the rule of the Seleucidae.

There are two points of special note about this period. First, it was at this time that Palestine was divided into the five sections which we find in the New Testament. (Sometimes the first three of these collectively are called Judea.) These different provinces are:

Judea,
Samaria,
Galilee,
Perea,
Trachonitis.

Secondly, this Syrian period was the most tragic part of the inter-Testament era for the Jews of Judea. Antiochus the Great was harsh toward the Jews. So was his successor. Yet the Jews in Judea were still permitted to live under their own laws, administered by the high priest and his council. But with the accession of Antiochus Epiphanes (175-164 B.C.) a "reign of terror" fell upon the Jews. In 170 B.C. Jerusalem was plundered, the wall torn down, the temple desecrated, temple sacrifices were abolished, the Holy of Holies was stripped of its costly furniture, Jewish religion was banned, a pig was sacrificed on the altar and the Temple at Jerusalem was rededicated to Jupiter Olympius with a statue of Jupiter Olympius erected on the altar and the people were subjected to monstrous cruelties.

5. The Maccabean Period (165-63 B.C.)

This excessiveness by Antiochus provoked the Jews to revolt and resist. Judas, known as Judas (Hebrew word for hammer), gathered around him a large army of guerilla fighters and after several victories assumed the offensive. Jerusalem was captured, the temple refurnished, and on 25th December, the anniversary of its being polluted three years earlier, the orthodox sacrifices were reinstituted (which date the Jews still observed as the Feast of the Dedication: see John 10:22). Judas Maccabeus, also captured the chief posts up and down the land.

Antiochus contemplated revenge against Judas, but a defeat in Persia, in addition to the successive defeats in Judea seemed to have brought upon him a superstitious dread which developed into a fatal sickness. He is said to have died in a state of raving madness.

What seems a deliverance, proved to be the deadliest crisis to come. Antiochus's son was very young. Lysias was the self-appointed Syrian regent. He now invades Judea with an army of 120,000 and defeats Judas and his army at Bethsura. Judas and his men retreat to Jerusalem which is placed under siege. But just when it seemed hopeless because of a rival regent at the Syrian capital, Lysias suddenly persuaded the young son of Antiochus to make peace with Judea - promising them the restoration of all their religious liberties. Thus the Maccabean revolt was crowned with success.

Further troubles arose later, however, from a new successor on the Syrian throne, Demetrius. During this period Judas Maccabeus was killed. In 143 B.C. Simon, the brother of Judas assumed leadership of the army. He was able to capture all other Syrian strongholds in Judea and forced the Syrian garrison in the citadel at Jerusalem to surrender.

Thus Judea was freed of all alien troops; and from that time (About 142 B.C.) was once again under independent Jewish government. Except for one short lapse, this continued until Judea became a Roman province, in 63 B.C.

6. The Roman Period (63 B.C. onward)

The Herod family now appears on the scene. Antipater, the father of the Herod who reigned at the time of our Lord's birth, managed to secure the support of Roman general Pompey to gain control of Judea. The result was a siege of Jerusalem which lasted three months with Pompey taking the city. Pompey with disregard for the Temple strolled into the Holy of Holies - an action which at

once estranged all loyal Jewish hearts toward the Roman. That was 63 B.C.

Pompey's subjugation of Jerusalem ended the period of Judea's regained independence. Judea now became a province of the Roman empire. The high priest was completely deprived of any royal status, and retained priestly function only. The governing power was exercised by Antipater, who was appointed procurator of Judea by Julius Cesar in 47 B.C.

Antipater appointed Herod (his own son by marriage with Cypros, and Arabian women) as governor of Galilee, when Herod was only fifteen years old. In about 40 B.C., after appealing to Rome, Herod was appointed king of the Jews.

Herod seeking to ingratiate himself with the Jews married Marianne, the granddaughter of a former high priest, and by making her brother Aristobulus high priest. He also greatly increased the splendor of Jerusalem, building the elaborate temple which was the center of Jewish worship in the time of our Lord.

However, he was as cruel and sinister as he was able and ambitious. He stained his hands with many murders. He slew all three of his wife's brothers - Antigonus, Aristobulus and Hyrcanus. Later he murdered even his wife. Again, later, he murdered his mother-in-law. And still later he murdered his own sons by Marianne. This is that "Herod the Great" who was king when our Lord was born.

Such, then, in brief, is the political history of the Jews in Palestine during the four-hundred-year period between Malachi and Matthew. Now we shall review the period from a religious and spiritual viewpoint.

The Religious and Spiritual Development

You do not have to read far into the pages of the New Testament until you realize that some great changes have come upon the Jews and the Jewish nation in Judea, since the last writer of the Old Testament laid down his pen. It is not simply that Palestine has changed hands half a dozen times. There are new sects or parties:

Pharisees,
Sadducees,
Herodians.

There are new institutions:

Synagogue,

Scribes,

Sanhedrin.

These changes - the rise of these new sects and institutions, and the evolutions of Judaism (the evolving of the people and their religion around the Old Testament Scriptures into one and the same- one implying the other) have come about during those four hundred years between the Old Testament and the New. This in itself shows the importance attached to the inter-Testament period. Let us now briefly look at these religious developments.

To begin with, if we are to understand in general the spirit and trend of the Jewish community during that stretch of centuries we must appreciate the profound impact made upon the nation by the Babylonian exile. The Jews went into that exile with what seemed a hopelessly incurable infatuation for idolatry; they emerged from it and have remained so to this day the most monotheistic people in the world with their belief in the one true God.

It is an extraordinary fact, that after the Babylonian exile the Jewish people are totally and for ever converted from idolatry into convinced worshippers of the one true God.

What happened to bring about this change? The Babylonian exile startled them into the realization that the gods of the heathen were lying vanities, and that Jehovah was the one true God, the Creator of all things, the sovereign Ruler of the universe, whose will alone is sovereign over the armies of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth. With realization they were once and forever cured of idolatry and thus they became confirmed worships of their covenant God Jehovah.

Now this system of Jewish religion which originated just after the Exile and developed during the inter-Testament period was founded on a new zeal for the Law (the sacred Scriptures) and the Messianic hope which came forth from those Scriptures - the hope concerning the coming Messiah who should permanently re-gather and exalt the chosen people, and under whose glorious reign all the promised blessings of the covenant made with Abraham would burst forth into fulfilment.

Synagogue

The Law now became the standard of holiness and the symbol of nationality.

Thus the rise of the local synagogue. For here the Scriptures were read and expounded by the scribes.

The basic idea of the synagogue was instruction in the Scriptures, not worship, even though an elaborate liturgical service developed later, with public prayers read by appointed persons, and responses made by the congregation. Also, since the public reading of the Law had now to be by translation into the Aramaic tongue which the people learned in Babylonia (see Neh. 8:8, where such translation is implied), the transition from translation to exposition and even to discourses was easy, though no doubt it took place gradually.

That such synagogue discourses were common in our Lord's time is seen in such references as Matthew 4:23, 9:35; Luke 4:15, 44; Acts 5:15, 14:1, 17:10, 18:19.

However, from that time, also, there began to form that elaborate system of interpretations, amplifications and additional regulations of which the Judaism of our Lord's time was the result.

Scribes

Who and what were the "scribes" the none-too-attractive figures who appear so frequently in the Gospel narratives? We read of scribes away back in Old Testament times, but they must be distinguished from that further order of scribes which developed during the inter-Testament period and had acquired such important status in our Lord's time.

It is not difficult to see how, when once this new order of scribes came in, it rapidly gained great power. The very nature of this new Judaism was to make every Jew personally responsible for the keeping of the whole Law. Therefore, "a definite rule" had somehow to be extracted from the Law to cover practically every activity of daily life. This endeavor to make the Law such a detailed code created a complex and sometimes acute problem. To accomplish this, there had to be a body of trained experts, who made the study of the Law the great business of their lives.

Thus the scribes who we meet in the Gospel narratives were a class of professional experts in the interpretation and application of the Law and the other Old Testament Scriptures. In the Greek of the New Testament their usual title is the plural, grammateis, translated as "scribes." Less frequently they are called "lawyers", nomikoi, as in Luke 7:30

It is with Ezra that the office of the scribe reaches a new dignity. In Nehemiah 8:1-8 we see Ezra elevated in a pulpit, reading and expounding and applying the Law and with Levite assistants, "causing the people to understand the Law."

Pharisees

The Pharisees must be distinguished from the scribes. Again and again in the Gospel narratives they are mentioned in conjunction with the scribes (Matthew 5:20, 12:38, 15:1, 23:2, Mark 2:16, Luke 5:21,30, etc.), but although this reveals closeness of affinity it does not imply oneness of identity. The Pharisees were an ecclesiastical party, held together by their peculiar aims and views, whereas the scribes were a body of experts in a scholastic sense. Certainly a man might be both a Pharisee and a scribe; and the fact is, that practically all the scribes were Pharisees in out look and association; yet the two fraternities were different from each other.

It was inevitable that the Pharisees should have much in common with the scribes, those specialist in the Written Law, and in the ever enlarging Oral Law (The Oral Law was that complex code of application of the Written Law to every area of one's life and activities). Indeed, as mentioned earlier, most of those who were scribes by vocation would be Pharisees in conviction.

The origin of the Pharisees as a movement may be compared to a river which flows underground for some distance before coming to the surface and flowing visibly onwards. The spirit and attitudes of the Pharisees were present in post-exile Judaism long before the sect took its historical form under the name "Pharisees."

We see the spirit of Phariseeism in the aim of Ezra and leaders of the Jewish remnant as expressed in Nehemiah 10:28,29. It is a spirit of "separatism" from all others to Jehovah through a strict observance of His Law. By common consent all mixed marriages were dissolved, and other irregularities corrected. In a mass meeting, and by signed covenant, the book of the Law was acclaimed as the binding standard for both state and individual. Separation to Jehovah was the controlling Idea. Separatism based on the Law (Written and Oral) was the ideology of the Pharisees.

The thing, however, that eventually crystallized them into a clique or sect was a body of Jews, primarily made up of the priests, whose goal and interest was the worldly aspects of religion and politics. These two groups provoked each other into existence. Thus we have the Pharisees on one side and the Sadducees on the other.

The Pharisees as a body were influential way beyond their numbers. According to Josephus the number of Pharisees in Herod's time was only about 6,000. Yet, despite their small number, they had in fact such a hold on the popular mind that no governing power could afford to disregard them. We need only read the four Gospels to see what sway they had in our Lord's days on earth - and what influence they had in bringing about His crucifixion.

The mark of the Pharisee - the ritualist - is that he is always ADDING TO- He is not content with the written Word of God, and with the plain truth of the Gospel. He must start adding his own ideas and ordinances, until religion and salvation are a highly complicated matter. This is just what the Pharisees did, until, with the weight of their accumulated religious ceremonies and observances, they made religion a burden too heavy for men to bear.

The Sadducees

The Sadducees seem to have been in the first instance neither a religious sect nor a political party, but a social clique. Numerically they were a much smaller body than the Pharisees, and belonged for the most part to the wealthy and influential priestly families who were the aristocrats of the Jewish nation.

The leaders of the party were the elders with seats in the council, the military officers, the statesmen, and officials who took part in the management of public affairs. With the mass of the people they never had much influence; like true aristocrats, they did not greatly care for it.

Their one ambition was to make themselves indispensable to the reigning prince, that they might conduct the government of the country according to their own views. The Sadducees held, like most modern politicians, that the law of God had no application to politics. If Israel was to be made great and prosperous it must be by well-filled treasuries, strong armies, skillful diplomacy, and all the resources of human abilities. To expect a Divine deliverance merely by making the people holy, they accounted as sheer and dangerous fatalism.

As a body they rejected totally the Oral Law accumulated by the scribes and held to by the Pharisees, and professed to stand by the Written Law alone; though, even their stand on the Written Law alone was done so with great skepticism. Matthew 22:23 and Acts 23:8 show how skeptical was their attitude to the Written Law, for we are told that they denied the bodily resurrection, and did not believe either in angels or spirits.

Thus, we can understand how intolerable to such a group were the teaching of Jesus and His Messianic claims. Their hatred is measured by their readiness to consort even with the detested Pharisees in order to kill Him. It was they, in fact, who were directly responsible for His crucifixion (compare Luke 3:2; John 11:49, 18:13,14,24, 19:15; Mark 15:11).

The mark of the Sadducee - the rationalist - is that he is always TAKING FROM. He cannot accept the written Word of God in its entirety, nor the truth of the Gospel as it stands without drastic deletions. Everything must be tried at the bar of human reason. This, that, and the other thing must be cut out to make faith reasonable and tenable. This was precisely the attitude of the Sadducee. He could not or rather would not, believe either in angels or demons, either in the resurrection of the dead or in any other miracle.

The Herodians

In Matthew 22:16, Mark 3:6 and 12:13 we find yet another Jewish clique, namely, the Herodians. Who were they? There is no explicit information as to their original banding together, but their very name, of course, speaks of the role. Whatever the religious preferences of its members may have been, the group as such was in no sense a religious cult or union. This is a political group and the leading aim of its members was to further the cause of the Herod government. Whether they were directly connected to the Herod household or throne is mere conjecture, but obviously the ready seal of royal approval would be theirs.

We can well imagine that many would consider it sound policy to strengthen the hold of the Herod house on Jewish leaders and public. What could be wiser than to back the Herodian throne, which enjoyed the favour of Rome, and thus giving Judea the protection of that mighty empire? Many would see in the Herods the one Jewish hope of separate national continuance; the one alternative to direct heathen rule. Others would be inclined to favour a blend of the ancient faith and Roman culture such as the first Herod and his successors had sought to effect as the highest consummation of Jewish hopes.

This group was hated by the Pharisees. The two parties were bitterly intolerant of each other, which makes the consorting of the Pharisees with the Herodians against our Lord all the more astonishing.

The mark of the Herodian - the secularist - he cared neither for adding to nor taking away from. Like the careless Gallio, he "cared for none of these things." The written Word of God, the message of the Gospel were far from his first

concern. His prime consideration was the life that now is. What does it matter that a heathen Herod reigns on a throne made crimson with crime so long as material interests are furthered? While the ritualist Pharisee was busy adding to, and the rationalist Sadducee was skeptically taking away from, the secularist Herodian was heedlessly passing by.

The Sanhedrin

There is one further Jewish institution which had its beginning during the inter-Testament period, which plays a big role in the Four Gospels: that is the Sanhedrin, quite often translated as "council". The Sanhedrin was the supreme civil and religious tribunal of the Jewish nation. The supreme judicial and administrative council of the Jewish people. With that representative body must lie forever the real responsibility for the crucifying of Israel's Messiah, the incarnate Son of God.

The Sanhedrin consisted of seventy-one members, made up, so it would seem, of:

The high priest;

Twenty-four "chief priests" who represented all twenty-four orders of the whole priesthood (I Chronicles 24:4,6);

Twenty-four "elders," who represented the laity, often called "elders of the people," as in Matthew 21:23, 24:3; Acts 4:8 - reminding us of Revelation 4:4;

Twenty-two "scribes," who were the expert interpreters of the law in matters both religious and civil.

When the word Sanhedrin is used, as in Mark 14:55, it denotes this fourfold assembly; and vice versa, where "chief priests and elders and scribes" are mentioned together, as in Matthew 16:21 it is referring to the Sanhedrin. An alternate name for the elders is "rulers." In some places we find just "chief priests and rulers" (Luke 23:13 or simply "rulers" (Acts 3:17)."

Our Lord presumably had in mind the president and seventy senators of the Sanhedrin when He chose His seventy representatives and co-workers, as recorded in Luke 10., just as He had the twelve tribes of Israel in mind when He appointed the twelve apostles. His choice of those seventy was prophetic perhaps, among other significances, that the authority of that old-time Jewish court was indeed now passing away in favor of a new "seventy" under His own

presidency.

The Common People

There is, yet, one very important aspect of the old-time Judaism which we must not on any account overlook. It is not only courts and schools and leaders and parties which compose a nation, but those thousands and thousands of individuals who are only known anonymously and collectively as "the common people."

These common people, far removed from the pomp of earthly courts and the strife of factions and the heated atmosphere of political and religious fanaticism were waiting for the consolation of Israel. And now at last as we enter into the New testament times, to such as these, the long expected Messiah had been revealed. In the hour of Israel's deepest degradation, when Herod's kingdom seemed to mock the aspirations of all faithful Israelites with its counterfeit resemblance of Messianic glory, their eyes beheld the Lord's Anointed, the true King of the kingdom of God, the Ruler, whose goings forth were from of old, from everlasting.

The Background of the New Testament

1. Alexander the Great and the Period of the Successors
2. The Beginnings of the Rise of Rome as a World Power
3. Judea From the Early Second Century BCE to 67 BCE
4. Pompey and the End of Jewish Independence
5. The Rise of Herod the Great
6. Jewish History from Herod's Death to the Jewish War
7. Nero's Persecution of the Church

1. Alexander the Great and the Period of the Successors

Alexander the Great died in 323 BCE. After his death, there was a period of intense political infighting among the possible successors of Alexander, who neither named a successor before his death nor had a son who was a viable candidate for king. The period after Alexander's death is known as the Diadochan period (Greek diadochos = successor). Eventually Alexander's unified empire was broken into smaller Hellenistic kingdoms, two of which were the Seleucid kingdom—stretching from Asia Minor eastward—and the Ptolemaic kingdom, which was centered in Egypt. Judea was originally a part of the Ptolemaic kingdom, but was incorporated into the Seleucid kingdom c. 198

BCE under Antiochus III, after one of many wars between the two kingdoms, known as the Syrian Wars. Succeeding Antiochus III was Seleucus IV Eupator and after him comes Antiochus IV Epiphanes. About this time Rome was beginning to make its presence felt in the eastern Mediterranean.

2. The Beginnings of the Rise of Rome as a World Power

Rome had taken control of Italy by the middle of the third century BCE. During the latter half of the third century BCE, Rome engaged in a conflict for supremacy with Carthage; the resulting wars were known as the Punic wars. (Punicus was the word that the Romans used for a Carthaginian.) In the First Punic War (264-41 BCE), Rome fought Carthage for control of Sicily and won. In the Second Punic War (218-201 BCE), Rome and Carthage fought again, and Hannibal invaded Italy, fighting the Romans on their own territory. The Romans eventually prevailed, and in 201 BCE, Carthage surrendered to Rome and was forced to cede Spain to Roman control. Rome fought with Carthage again in the Third Punic War (149-146 BCE), and this time Rome devastated Carthage, eliminating it as a major power in the Mediterranean world.

In the second century BCE, Rome also came into conflict with the Macedonian (or Antigonid) kingdom, which eventually led to its conquest by Rome. The Macedonian Kingdom had allied itself with Carthage during the First Punic War, thereby making enemies of the Romans. Between 215-206 BCE, Rome, allied with the Aetolian League, Sparta, and Pergamum, defeated Philip V, king of the Macedonian kingdom, and his ally, the Achaian League, forcing Philip to agree to peace on terms favorable to the Romans and their allies (First Macedonian War). The enemies of Philip V complained to Rome that Philip was infringing on their territory; the senate declared war, and Rome defeated Philip's forces (Second Macedonian War) (200-196 BCE). The decisive battle was at Cynoscephalae in Thessaly in 196 BCE. Philip was to pay indemnity and divest himself of all Greek territory; the Greeks were granted freedom but allied themselves with Rome, following Rome's direction. After the Second Macedonian War, the Seleucid kingdom, ruled by Antiochus III, taking advantage of the confusion in Macedonia/Greece, sought to take control of parts of Asia Minor and Thrace that once belonged to the Macedonian kingdom. In 190 BCE, however, at the battle of Magnesia, the Romans defeated the Seleucid kingdom. This was a foreshadowing of a greater Roman presence in the eastern Mediterranean.

3. Judea from the Early Second Century BCE to 67 BCE

Judea existed in an uneasy relationship with the Seleucid kingdom. A major source of tension was the issue of Hellenism, which was the state-supported culture of the Seleucid kingdom. The Seleucid rulers encouraged Hellenism among their subject peoples in hope of unifying them into a single culture, thereby lessening the possibility of dissension and revolt. There was a political faction of Jews in Judea that was in favor of the Hellenization of Jewish society, to whom 1 & 2 Maccabees refer in unfavorable terms (these men are called "men outside the law" or "the lawless men"). In 174 BCE Onias III, the High Priest, was deposed by Antiochus IV in favor of his brother Joshua, who went by the Hellenistic name of Jason. The High Priest functioned as the ruler and representative of the Jewish people. Joshua (Jason) offered Antiochus IV money and cooperation in the process of Hellenization, if he made him High Priest; Antiochus accepted the offer. Joshua (Jason) was High Priest for three years (174-171 BCE), during which time he built a gymnasium in Jerusalem, a cultural institution instrumental in the promotion of Hellenistic culture; he also established an ephebate, intended for Jewish adolescent males (ephebes). The purpose of an ephebate (or ephebeia) was the education and military training of the male children of the ruling class. It would seem that the goal of Joshua (Jason) was to convert Jerusalem into a Hellenistic city (polis) within the Seleucid kingdom.

After three years, in 171 BCE, a rival to Joshua (Jason) named Menelaus made a better offer to Antiochus IV; as a result, Joshua (Jason) was deposed as High Priest and was replaced by Menelaus, who arranged to have Onias III murdered. In 170 BCE, on the false rumor that Antiochus IV was dead, Joshua (Jason) and his supporters attacked Jerusalem, and forced his rival, Menelaus and his supporters, to take refuge in the citadel in Jerusalem. Antiochus IV used this incident as a pretense to intervene militarily in the affairs of Judea. At the time he was involved in a successful campaign against the Ptolemaic kingdom to the south of Judea (Sixth Syrian War); on his return to Syria in 169 BCE, he invaded Jerusalem, killed many Jews who opposed him, and plundered the Temple. He was aided in all this by Menelaus and his supporters.

In 168 BCE, Antiochus IV resumed his campaign against the Ptolemaic kingdom in order to consolidate his previous gains, but this time, before he could carry out his intentions, the Roman general Popilius Laeneas sent an ultimatum to Antiochus IV ordering him to withdraw from Egypt or else be considered an enemy of Rome (the Ptolemaic kingdom had become an ally of Rome). Antiochus IV withdrew unwillingly; instead of attacking Egypt, he ordered that Jerusalem become a Hellenistic city and that Judaism become an

outlawed religion and way of life. (Exactly why Antiochus IV began a religious persecution against the Jews is not clear and is a matter of debate.) Those Jews who would not cooperate would be killed and their wives and children sold into slavery. The Jews as a people were forbidden to circumcise their children, observe the Sabbath, in short, to do anything that would distinguish them as Jews. A pagan altar was placed upon the altar in the Temple and animals—including pigs—were sacrificed to the Olympic Zeus. Probably, the rationale given for this action was that the God of the Hebrew Bible should be identified with Zeus, the head of the Greek pantheon; in other words, the Jews were not abandoning their ancestral God but simply recognizing God's universality. The worship of the other Greek gods was also introduced in Jerusalem and other parts of Judea; pagan altars were built and Jews were encouraged to participate in sacrifices at these altars. As indicated, there were Jews who welcomed the policy of forced Hellenization and cooperated with Antiochus IV; but there were also those who opposed the policy and refused to abandon the Law, the conformity to which made the Jews distinctive as a people. This led to a civil war between those Jews who supported the measures taken by Antiochus IV and those who opposed them.

In 167 BCE, in a town called Modein, near Jerusalem, an officer of the king required that the people of the town sacrifice at a pagan altar. A man named Matthatias, a priest who had five sons, was present, and when a Jew went forward to offer the sacrifice, Matthatias killed him and the officer of the king, and fled to the mountains with his family and some supporters. This began the Maccabean revolt. Matthatias died later that year, and was succeeded by his son Judas, who was nicknamed "Maccabee," probably meaning "hammer"; his family was known by the name Hasmon, from which the adjective Hasmonean has its origin. Judas rallied to himself many Jews who in 1 Maccabees are called collectively the chasidim ("the pious ones") and together they won battle after battle against the Seleucid army until Judas established himself and his followers as the de facto ruling force in Jerusalem and Judea. Judas set out to reverse the effects of the policy of forced Hellenization, and in 165 BCE purified and rededicated the Temple. This event became the basis of the new, post-biblical festival called Chanukkah ("Dedication"). There were many Jews, however, who opposed Judas and rejected his anti-Hellenistic, isolationist policies. Judas met his end on the battlefield in 160 BCE.

The period of time from Judas' victory until the conquest of Judea by the Roman general Pompey saw the expansion of the Jewish state through conquest under the leadership of the Hasmoneans (the Maccabeans) and their descendants, although they continued to fight with the Seleucids and with pro-Seleucid Jews who opposed them. Judas founded a dynasty that lasted several generations. A

series of Hasmonean rulers emerged during this period, brothers or Hasmonean descendants: Judas (165-60 BCE); Jonathan (160-142 BCE); Simon (142-134 BCE); John Hyrcanus (son of Simon) (134-104 BCE); Aristobolus (son of John Hyrcanus) (104-103 BCE); Alexander Jannaeus (son of John Hyrcanus) (103-76 BCE). As time went on, the Jewish people made the Hasmoneans both a ruling dynasty as well as High Priests, although some Jews did not approve of a priestly family assuming the kingship.

There were Jews who were equally as anti-Hellenistic as the Hasmoneans but who, after initially supporting them, withdrew their support; most notable is the group that became known as the Essenes, who identify themselves as "the community" (yachad) in the Qumran sectarian writings. During this period also, the Pharisees emerged as a distinct religious and political group, who likewise found themselves at odds with the Hasmoneans at times. The Pharisees probably separated from the Jewish group that became known as the Essenes over conflicts with the man identified in the Qumran sectarian writings as the "Teacher of Righteousness," the founder and leader of an anti-Hellenistic, religious and political renewal movement among Jews in Judea. The origin of the Jewish religious group known as the Sadducees, however, is difficult to determine. They were rivals with the Pharisees and generally were identified with the Jewish aristocracy, so that they tended not to come into conflict with the Hasmoneans, since their interests usually coincided.

By 76 BCE under Alexander Jannaeus, the borders of the Jewish state were expanded mostly through conquest to include all of Palestine. A woman, Salome Alexandra, the wife of Alexander Jannaeus, succeeded her husband in 76 BCE, and ruled in alliance with the Pharisees, unlike her husband, who favored the Sadducees. Her son Hyrcanus II served as High Priest during this period.

- Dead Sea Scrolls
- Phylacteries

4. Pompey and the End of Jewish Independence

Jewish and Roman histories begin to intersect in the early part of the first century BCE, so that one cannot discuss Jewish history of this period without discussing Roman history (the reverse is not as true, of course). When Salome died in 67 BCE, there arose a conflict between Hyrcanus II and his brother Aristobolus II over who would succeed their mother as both High Priest and king; these two brothers were leaders of de facto political parties within the Jewish state. Aristobolus II declared war on Hyrcanus II, and in a decisive battle many of the soldiers supporting Hyrcanus II deserted to Aristobolus II.

Hyrchanus II conceded that his brother Aristobolus II would be High Priest and king, but the matter did not end there. Antipater, an Idumean who had been appointed governor of Idumea (Edom) by Alexander Jannaeus, the father of the two brothers, took up the cause of Hyrchanus II and with the military support of the Nabatean king Aretas—who had lost much territory to the Jews—marched to Jerusalem, laid siege to the city and demanded that Hyrchanus II be reinstated as High Priest and be appointed king.

Meanwhile, the Roman general Pompey (Gaius Pompeius Magnus) on the authority of the Roman senate had gone to Asia Minor in order to put down a rebellion by Mithridates VI Eupator, the king of Pontus. Pompey defeated Mithridates in 66 BCE in what is called the Third Mithridatic War (74-63 BCE). While in Asia Minor, Pompey heard of the dispute going on in Jerusalem between Hyrchanus II and Aristobolus II from one of his generals, (Marcus Aemilius) Scaurus, who had been sent to Syria. Scaurus began to travel to Judea to sort out and capitalize politically on this internal crisis of the Jews. Hearing that the Roman general was on his way to Judea, both Aristobolus II and Hyrchanus II sent emissaries to him in order to gain his support for their respective causes; each offered a bribe to Scaurus. This was the beginning of the end of the Hasmonean dynasty. Scaurus temporarily decided in favor of Aristobolus II and ordered Aretas to withdraw, which he did. In the meantime, Pompey conquered Syria, and Syria was made into a Roman province with a proconsul; this was the end of the Seleucid kingdom.

In 63 BCE, Pompey met with Aristobolus II and Hyrchanus II in Damascus to hear their respective cases for being appointed High Priest and king of the Jewish state. A third delegation of Jews requested that the monarchy be abolished, but Pompey did not take its request too seriously. Pompey asked both brothers to stay in Damascus and to wait on his decision while he was engaged in a military campaign against the Nabateans. Aristobolus II, however, left Damascus without Pompey's permission, so that Pompey justifiably suspected Aristobolus II of being disloyal to him and Roman interests in general. So with some of his troops Pompey pursued Aristobolus II and those with him, who eventually surrendered near Jericho. In the meantime, the people of Jerusalem shut the gates of the city against (Aulus) Gabinius, Roman statesman and general, who was sent to Jerusalem by Pompey to get money that Aristobolus II had promised (i.e. the bribe) and to take possession of the city. Having taken Aristobolus II as a prisoner, Pompey then marched on the city, and the gates were opened to him by the followers of Hyrchanus II. The supporters of Aristobolus II were forced to take refuge in the Temple. Pompey besieged the Temple, and within three months broke through the walls and allegedly killed about 12,000 Jews. (This is according to Josephus, who tends to exaggerate

when it comes to numbers.) Afterwards the borders of the former Jewish state were greatly reduced; what remained was the regions of Judea, Idumea, Perea and Galilee. Pompey installed Hyrcanus II as High Priest, but did not give him the title of king; he took Aristobolus II and many other Jewish prisoners of war to Rome where they were resettled. A few years later Hyrcanus II was stripped of all political power, and Gabinius, now proconsul of Syria, divided what territory remained of the Hasmonean state into five regions, under his immediate control, each with its own capital city. This was the end of an independent Jewish state.

5. The Rise of Herod the Great

In Rome, a civil war erupted between Pompey and Julius Caesar in 49 BCE, former members of the first triumvirate, the other being (Marcus Licinius) Crassus, who had died. (The first triumvirate was formed in 59 BCE in response to the crisis in the Roman republic caused by the social unrest in Rome and Italy.) At first Hyrcanus II, the High Priest, and Antipater, who was the power behind Hyrcanus II, supported Pompey, as most from the east did, but quickly switched allegiances when it was discovered that Caesar and his allies had been victorious over Pompey, who had fled to Egypt and was killed in 48 BCE by Caesar's allies there. Hyrcanus II and Antipater provided Caesar with military support in his war with Ptolemy XIII, an ally of Pompey. After his victory Julius Caesar was given autocratic powers by the Roman senate to carry through the necessary reforms to bring stability to the Roman empire; he was proclaimed *dictator* (an ancient political position of absolute power in times of crisis) in 46 BCE for ten years and in 45 BCE it became a life appointment; he held the consulship several times and was the *pontifex maximus*. He also took the title *imperator*, a military position of "commander-in-chief." The Roman republic had come to an end. In gratitude for the help given to him, Caesar confirmed Hyrcanus II as High Priest and also appointed him ethnarch of the Jews, while Antipater received the appointment of procurator (*epitropos*) of Judea. (As indicated, Antipater was not ethnically a Jew but an Idumean.) Antipater had two sons, Phasaël and Herod, both of whom were quite active militarily and politically in various capacities.

Jules Caesar

Julius Caesar was murdered in 44 BCE by (Marcus Junius) Brutus and Cassius (Gaius Cassius Longinus), part of a conspiracy to restore the Roman republic; Marcus Antonius, a consul and supporter of Caesar sought to avenge the death of Caesar, with the result that another civil war broke out in the Roman empire. Hyrcanus II and Antipater allied themselves with Cassius. Marcus Antonius and

Gaius Octavius with the legions under their command, however, defeated Brutus and Cassius and their legions in 42 BCE. This began the time of the second triumvirate composed of Marcus Antonius, Octavius and (Marcus Aemilius) Lepidus. Antipater was murdered in 43 BCE. Although they, like their father, had supported Cassius, after the death of Cassius, Herod and Phasael along with Hyrcanus II quickly changed their allegiance and managed to convince Marcus Antonius with the help of a bribe that they would be loyal to him.

In 40 BCE Antigonus, a son of Aristobulus II, allied with the Parthians, the enemies of Rome, gained control of Jerusalem; a Hasmonean was once again king. Antigonus took Hyrcanus II and Phasael prisoners. Herod escaped to Masada, while Phasael killed himself while in prison. Antigonus had the ears of his uncle Hyrcanus II cut off in order to disqualify him as High Priest, a position that he then assumed. Meanwhile, Herod left Masada and arrived in Rome in 40 BCE. He gained the confidence of Marcus Antonius and Octavius (Lepidus no longer shared power with the other two triumvirs at this point). The Roman senate granted Herod the title of king of the Jews, and in 37 BCE he marched to Jerusalem with Roman military help and regained the city. Herod successfully bribed Marcus Antonius to have Antigonus killed, fearing that he would convince the senate that he was the legitimate king, and not Herod.

From 37 until 4 BCE, Herod reigned in Jerusalem and gradually with the approval of the Romans expanded his kingdom to include most of Palestine; it was larger in extent than the Hasmonean kingdom at its peak. Herod's kingdom included both Jews and gentiles, but he did not follow the Hasmonean policy of forcibly converting gentiles to Judaism. It is at this point that the events described in the New Testament begin to take place.

In spite of tumultuous familial relations (Herod had a total of ten wives during his life and children from them) and a certain amount of unpopularity among his subjects, Herod maintained tight control of Palestine as a client king of the Romans. During his reign, he undertook many building projects, including an expansion of the Jerusalem Temple and the construction of the port-city of Caesarea Maritima. Early in Herod's reign, Marcus Antonius and Octavius had a falling out, which led to another civil war. They had agreed to share power in the empire, Marcus Antonius the east and Octavius the west. Marcus Antonius became involved with Cleopatra VII, of Ptolemaic royal lineage, and began to behave as an oriental despot rather than as a Roman. As a result, with the support of the Roman senate, Octavius fought and defeated him at the battle of Actium in Greece in 31 BCE. Although they managed to escape to Alexandria, Marcus Antonius and Cleopatra VII realized that there was no way of eluding Octavius, so that both committed suicide. In all this upheaval, Herod had

supported Octavius, so his position at the end of the civil war was secure. The senate changed Octavius' name to Augustus and gave him the title of *princeps* ("leader") and *imperator* ("commander-in-chief"); although officially the senate had all authority, in actuality a dyarchy was in place. It is customary to call this form of government the principate.

The Roman emperors, beginning with Augustus, who are relevant to the New Testament are as follows: 1. Augustus (27 BCE - 14); Tiberius (14-37); Gaius (Caligula) (37-41); Claudius (41-54); Nero (54-68); Galba (69); Vitellius (69); Vespasian (69-79); Titus (79-81); Domitian (81-96).

6. Jewish History from Herod's Death to the Jewish War

Herod died of a long, painful illness in 4 BCE, and he bequeathed his kingdom to three of his sons, Archelaus, Herod Antipas and Philip; Herod's kingdom was to be divided among them.

The three sons then traveled to Rome to petition Augustus to ratify Herod's last will (he had made other wills previously with different arrangements). The majority of Jews in Jerusalem also sent a delegation to Augustus asking him to abolish the Herodian dynasty and to place the region under direct Roman rule. Augustus decided in favor of Herod's last will. He divided Herod's kingdom into three smaller territories.

According to Josephus, after Herod's death, there was much political and social unrest in Herod's former kingdom, which indicates how discontent many Jews were with being a part of the Roman empire (*Ant.* 17.250-298). Before he left for Rome, Archelaus suppressed with military force political unrest in Jerusalem during Passover, which then escalated to become an actual armed revolt. Archelaus restored the peace by sending in his whole army. Another rebellion broke out after Archelaus' departure for Rome, during Pentecost (Festival of Weeks), which was suppressed by Varus, the proconsul of Syria. Varus then left for Antioch, leaving behind a legion to deal with the problems. After Varus' departure, there was more rebellion in Jerusalem, caused in part by the corruption of the procurator Sabinus. Outside of Jerusalem, in the absence of an immediate successor to Herod, there arose three claimants to the throne. Each had his followers with enough military support to be dangerous to the public peace. First, Judas, son of Ezekias (Hezekiah), and his armed supporters terrorized Galilee. (How Judas met his end, however, is not provided by Josephus.) Second, in Jericho, Simon, a former slave of Herod, declared himself to be king. He and his followers, many of whom came from Perea, burned the royal palace at Jericho, and plundered other royal residences. He was defeated

by the Roman Gratus, who caught up with him in a valley and cut off his head. Finally, a man named Athronges, a shepherd, named himself king with support of his four brothers in Judea; each of the brothers was a commander of a militia. Eventually, after a protracted conflict with Archelaus, these militias were defeated one by one.

Herod Antipas, whose mother was Malthace, was appointed tetrarch of Perea and Galilee; he was in power when Jesus was growing up and during his public ministry (see Josephus, *Ant.* 18; *War* 2. 167-68; *Life* 9, 12, 54). Not surprisingly, he is referred to in the gospels, but simply as Herod; he is even popularly called King Herod (Mark 6:14), even though his official title is tetrarch (Luke 9:7).

Philip, son of Cleopatra of Jerusalem, became the tetrarch of territory that consisted of several regions, including the north eastern part of the sea of Galilee, where the town of Bethsaida, was located. The disciples Peter (Simon), his brother Andrew, and Philip were from Bethsaida (John 1:44); Jesus feeds the five thousand near Bethsaida (Mark 6:45) and heals a blind man there (Mark 8:22) (see Josephus, *Ant.* 18.26-27; 18.106-108; *War* 2.167-68; 2.181). Philip is not mentioned in the New Testament, but reference is made to a city named after him: Caesarea Philippi. The name derives from "Caesar Augustus" and Philip's own name; it had a double name to distinguish it from the other Caesarea, the harbour city built by Herod the Great.

Archelaus, full brother of Herod Antipas, became ethnarch of Judea and Samaria, a superior title to the two other sons of Herod, who were only tetrarchs. However, Archelaus lasted only a few years in his position, owing primarily to Jewish complaints against him; he was removed from power in 6 and exiled to Gaul.

In 6 Archelaus' territory was placed under the direct control of the Romans under the authority of a procurator (or praefectus); one of the more historically notable of these procurators was Pontius Pilatus, who was the fifth to assume the post in 26.

For a brief time Palestine was again under the rule of a single king. Herod Agrippa I, grandson of Herod the Great and the Hasmonean Mariamne I, and son of Aristobolus (Herod executed both Mariamne I and her son Aristobolus) resided in Rome and there gained the confidence and favor of Gaius (Caligula), the Roman emperor (Agrippa was Caligula's tutor in his youth). In 37 Herod Agrippa I was given the territory that Philip ruled, and in 39 he assumed the former kingdom of Herod Antipas; in 41, he was granted the rest of Palestine (Judea, Samaria, and Idumea) by Claudius who succeeded the murdered Gaius (Caligula) (see Josephus, *Ant.* 18.143-256; 19.274-366; *War* 2.178-220). Herod

Agrippa I ruled during the earliest period of the history of the church; not surprisingly, he appears in the Book of Acts. The following are references to Herod Agrippa I in the Book of Acts, where he is called simply "Herod."

Upon the death of Herod Agrippa I in 44, the whole territory that he ruled was annexed to the province of Syria; it was ruled by Roman procurators under the authority of the legates of Syria. These procurators tended to be incompetent administrators, usually seeking primarily to enrich themselves during their brief terms in office. Two of these procurators were Antonius Felix (52-60) and Porcius Festus (60-62), both of whom are referred to in the Book of Acts.

Under Claudius' reign in 50, Herod Agrippa II, the son of Herod Agrippa I, received the territory that Philip, the son of Herod the Great, had ruled as tetrarch, in addition to control of the Temple. The emperor Nero confirmed this appointment when he came to power, and even expanded it in 54. Herod Agrippa II is called Agrippa in the Book of Acts.

In 66 a war broke out between rebellious factions of Jews and Rome; the war culminated in the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in 70. The Roman procurators' corruption and ineptitude fueled the independence movement with religious overtones in those regions of Palestine heavily populated by Jews. Years of tension came to a head in 66. The illegal appropriation of funds from the Temple treasury by Florus, the last Roman procurator, sparked a riot, which culminated in the storming of the Antonia citadel and the slaughter of the unarmed Roman cohorts (one tenth of a legion, which during the time of imperial Rome was about 6,000 men) stationed there; this was a declaration of war against Rome. Those favouring the political alternative of suing the Romans for peace were driven from the city, leaving it to the rebels, many of whom belonged to the group known as the Zealots.

The emperor Nero responded to the uprising by sending the Roman general Vespasian with 60,000 legionaries, auxillaries and allies under his charge. Departing from Antioch in Syria, Vespasian retook Galilee between 66 and 68; he then moved south to Judea, and besieged Jerusalem in 68. Nero died, however, in 68, and there erupted chaos in Rome over who would succeed him as emperor. Vespasian lifted his siege of Jerusalem until political stability in Rome was re-established. The Jewish rebels interpreted this as victory. Galba was acclaimed emperor, and Vespasian sent his son Titus to Rome to convey a greeting to him; but before he arrived, he heard in Corinth that Galba had been murdered. Titus returned to his father in Caesarea. After Galba, Vitellius was proclaimed emperor. In 69, the legions under Vespasian's command acclaimed him as a rival emperor to Vitellius. Since Vitellius was murdered in 69,

Vespasian encountered little opposition when returned to Rome to make good on his claim to being the new Roman emperor.

Vespasian left his son Titus in Palestine in charge of the army consisting of four legions; Titus then resumed the siege of Jerusalem in 70. After many successful campaigns at taking regions of the city, Titus succeeded in breaking into the Temple where many of the Jewish rebels and the remaining civilian population had retreated. The Romans killed almost all the Jews in the Temple area and burned or otherwise destroyed the Temple structures. There remained only the upper city of Jerusalem to take, which the Romans soon did. The Romans kept alive a select few to march in a triumphal procession in Rome; after the procession the prisoners were executed. With the destruction of Jerusalem there remained three fortresses still held by the Zealots, one of which was Masada; by 73 these had also been taken (see Tacitus, *Histories*, 5.1-13 for a Roman perspective on Jewish history, including the destruction of the Temple [5.10-13]; other sources for this period in Roman history include Tacitus, *Histories*, 2.1-4, 79-93; 4.81; 5.12-26; Suetonius, *Vespasian* 5-6; *Titus*, 4-5; Dio Cassius, *Roman History* 66.1, 4-7, 15).

7. Nero's Persecution of the Church

Nero succeeded the murdered Claudius as emperor in 54. Although he is not mentioned by name in the New Testament, he is the Caesar referred to in Acts 25-28 and Phil 4:2. By all accounts, in the latter part of his reign Nero was a moral degenerate and madman, who abused his power as emperor, being responsible for many murders. Because of the certain threat of imminent revolt, Nero had no choice but to commit suicide in 68.

On July 19, 64 a fire began in Rome that would burn for five days; the fire began in the circus maximus, and eventually spread to ten of the fourteen districts in which the city was divided. Nero was in Antium when the fire broke out, and then returned to Rome. In spite of his relief efforts, rumor abounded that Nero himself was responsible for the fire; according to Suetonius, his purpose in arranging for the burning of Rome was to be able to rebuild the city on a grander scale (see Tacitus, *Annals* 15.38-43; Suetonius, *Nero* 38). In order to quell this rumour, Nero blamed the Christians for the fire, who, known for their anti-social attitude (odium humani generis), made perfect scapegoats. Beginning probably in 65, Nero ordered that confessed Christians be arrested and interrogated; then on their disclosures (of the existence of others who were Christians, presumably) vast numbers of Christians were convicted and executed in cruel and unusual ways: "They were covered with the skins of wild beasts and torn to death by dogs; or they were fastened on crosses, and, when daylight

failed, were burned to serve as lamps by night" (Tacitus, *Annals*, 15.44; see Suetonius, *Nero*, 16.2; *1 Clement* 6). According to early and reliable tradition, among the Christians who died during Nero's persecution were the apostles Peter and Paul (Eusebius, *H.E.* 2.25; 3.1). Paul was beheaded, whereas Peter was crucified (according to Origen, Peter was crucified upside down at his own request). Tacitus reports that those who witnessed the public execution of Christians took pity on them, contrary to Nero's intention, because they believed that they were merely victims of one man's cruelty. There is no clear indication how long the persecution lasted or whether it was continuous or intermittent. Nevertheless, with Nero's death in 68, the pogrom against the Roman Christians came to an end, for Vespasian did not have the same hostile designs towards the church.

The History of the Septuagint

The word "Septuagint" is often used when referring to the Hebrew Bible, yet many people do not know what it refers to, or the very interesting story behind the text. Until about 200 BCE, the Hebrew Bible was only available in the original language in which it was written: Biblical Hebrew. After Alexander the Great died, his massive Greek Empire was split in two, and ultimately a ruler named Ptolemy II Philadelphus came to rule the southwestern portion of this empire, based in Egypt. Seeing the Hebrew Bible as a great philosophical and literary treasure, Ptolemy II Philadelphus decided that he wanted the entire Hebrew Bible to be translated into Greek to be placed in his library.

In order to accomplish his mission of translating the Bible from Ancient Hebrew into contemporary Greek, he picked 70 (some say 72) of the most renowned Jewish scholars. In fact, the word "Septuagint" comes from the Latin word meaning "seventy". He placed each scholar in a separate room on the Island of Pharos, and had them all translate the text. According to tradition, all of the scholars emerged with their completed translations on the same day and the translations were nearly identical, with just 13 differences between them all!

Ptolemy II Philadelphus took the translation and produced the first copy of the Hebrew Bible which was not in the Ancient Hebrew language. While Jews continue reading and studying the Hebrew Bible in its original Biblical Hebrew language, many translations of the Hebrew Bible were actually translated from the Septuagint and not from the original text. This means that many translations of the Hebrew Bible which are used and studied to this day are actually taken from Greek and not directly from Biblical Hebrew! This is one reason why so many mistakes have been made and promulgated in translations of the Bible over the centuries.

About Josephus from writers research work

Emil Schürer writes: "The best known historian of Jewish affairs in the Greek language is the Palestinian Josephus, properly Joseph, the son of Matthias, a priest of Jerusalem. Of his two chief works one is, the *Ιουδαϊκή Αρχαιολογία*, a *comprehensive delineation of the entire Jewish history* from the beginning to his own times. It is the most extensive work on Jewish history in the Greek language with which we are acquainted, and has on that account so retained the lasting favour of Jewish, heathen and Christian readers, as to have been preserved entire in numerous manuscripts. . . . Notwithstanding its great difference from the philosophizing delineation of Philo, its tendency is similar. For it is the purpose of Josephus, not only to instruct his heathen readers, for whom it was in the first instance intended, in the history of his people, but also to inspire them with respect for the Jewish nation, both as having a history of hoary antiquity, and a long series of celebrities both in peace and war to point to, and as able to bear comparison in respect of laws and institutions with any nation (comp. especially *Antt.* xvi. 6. 8). The other chief work of Josephus, the *History of the Jewish War from A.D. 66-73*, gives the history more for its own sake. The events of these years are in themselves so important, that they seemed worthy of a detailed description. Perhaps it was written by command of Vespasian, from whom Josephus received an annual salary (*Vita*, 76), and to whom the work was delivered as soon as it was completed (*contra Apion*, i. 9; *Vita*, 65). If a tendency to boasting is detected in it, this refers rather to the individual Josephus and the Romans than to the Jewish nation." (*The Literature of the Jewish People in the Time of Jesus*, pp. 221-222)

Martin McNamara writes: "All of Josephus' four extant works are important sources for Jewish history and tradition. The first to be composed was *The Jewish War*—an account of the war of the Jews against the Romans. Josephus himself tells us that he wrote two versions of this. The first one was in his own vernacular, i.e. Aramaic, and composed for 'the up-country barbarians', i.e. the Aramaic-speaking Jews of the Parthian kingdom, especially those of Babylon. This edition is lost. The extant Greek version is an adaptation by Josephus himself of the Aramaic work. It was published about A.D. 78, when Josephus was about 40 years old. The next work to be published was *The Jewish Antiquities*, about sixteen years later (A.D. 94 or so). It appears that soon before the publication of *The Antiquities* Justus of Tiberias had published his history of the Jewish War, with serious accusation of misconduct during the war in Galilee directed against Josephus. It is possible that Josephus' third and autobiographical work, the *Life*, was published at the same time as the *Antiquities* and as a reply to Justus. Some scholars, however, maintain that the *Life* was published about A.D. 96, and may have appeared together with a second edition of the

Antiquities that appeared between A.D. 93/94 and 100. Josephus' final extant work to be published was *Against Apion*, or to give its original title, *On the Antiquity of the Jews*. In the first part of this work Josephus sets out to refute the detractions and contentions of anti-Semitic writings. In the course of doing so he excerpts from a large number of works no longer extant. In the second part Josephus gives his positive defence of the Jewish people, setting forth the inner value of Judaism and its superiority over Hellenism. In this we have a rather full presentation of Jewish halakah as known to Josephus." (*Intertestamental Literature*, p. 239)

James C. VanderKam writes: "After preparing the Galilee militarily, Josephus led the fight in the north against the advancing Roman army under the command of Vespasian. The Romans defeated Josephus' forces and he himself was eventually captured by them. Josephus was brought before Vespasian and predicted that he would become emperor. Vespasian kept him in custody until he was indeed declared emperor by his troops in 69 CE in Egypt. At that point he released the prophetic Josephus, and the future historian returned to Judea with Titus, Vespasian's son, who now had the task of suppressing the revolt. At Titus's behest he would, from time to time, try to convince the defenders of Jerusalem to surrender, but to no avail; he was himself injured in the process (*War* 5.363-419)." (*An Introduction to Early Judaism*, p. 143)

Raymond F. Surburg writes: "In evaluating the historical worthiness of *The Jewish War*, it must not be forgotten that the *Memoirs* are written from a Roman point of view. Furthermore, the fact that Josephus is writing under imperial patronage tended to give the work a pro-Roman bias. A comparison between *The Jewish War* and the *Life* does not present a consistent portrayal of the Galilean campaign. Laquer, in *Der juedische Historiker Flavius Josephus* suspects Josephus of deliberate misrepresentation of details so that he might find favor with his other patron, King Agrippa II." (*Introduction to the Intertestamental Period*, p. 165)

Josephus 'writings and their relation to the New Testament

I. Josephus' Contribution to New Testament Backgrounds

A. General Areas of Contribution

Josephus was born in Jerusalem in A.D. 37/38 and became a historian writing principally about the Jewish people up until his death ca. 100. Four of his works are extant: 1) *The Jewish War*; 2) *The Jewish Antiquities*; 3) *Vita* (life) and 4) *Against Apion*. These works provide us with knowledge of the New Testament era which we otherwise would not possess. In short, Josephus has contributed to

our understanding of the social, political, historical (incl. chronological data) and religious backgrounds of the New Testament.

B. Specific Examples¹

1. The Hasmoneans

Josephus talks about the Hasmonean line, including such people as Judas ben Mattathias (*Ant.* 12. 6. 1-4); Judas the Maccabee (*Ant.* 12. 7-11); John Hyrcanus I (*Ant.* 13. 8-12); Aristobulus I (*Ant.* 13. 10. 1-3); Alexander Jannaeus (*War* 1.4, 5; *Ant.* 13. 12-16); Alexandra Salome (*Ant.* 13. 14. 1, 5, 6); Hyrcanus II (*Ant.* 14. 1-4, 8; Aristobulus II (*Ant.* 13. 16-14. 1, 3, 6, 7) and of course Mariamne I (*War* 1. 12, 22); Herod the Great and several others.

These people, through Josephus' recounting of their lives, play a significant role in helping us to understand how the high priesthood was viewed in the years leading up to the coming of Christ, and their relation to the emerging religious sects in Israel, i.e. the Pharisees, the Sadducees, etc. further enlightens us as to the political, spiritual climate in Israel at that time.

2. Herod the Great and His Family

Josephus has a great deal to say about the antecedents of Herod the Great as well as he and his family after him. A few items have been selected for discussion.

a. Herod was a competent person, able to hunt, ride a horse, shoot an arrow, win in combat, etc. (*War* 1. 21. 13.). From descriptions like this we can understand how he was able to escape capture by the Parthians, and later lead Roman troops back to Judea, defeat the Parthians and gain control of the land. It is quite reasonable to understand then how he was King of the Jews as the Gospel writers affirm (*Matt* 2:1; *Luke* 1:5). It is also interesting to note that, according to Josephus, Herod was installed as King of Judea by the decree of Caesar Augustus (*War* 1. 20).

b. The linking of Herod with the reign of Caesar helps us also in dating the New Testament events described by the Gospel writers. For example, generally speaking Herod died after 33 years of service to Rome in 4 B. C. and Christ was born right around the same time, a little before perhaps—4 or 5 B. C. (cf. *Matt* 2:1 and 2:16). Many other dates are secured by Josephus with respect to the Roman governors.

c. He was a tireless builder as Josephus makes evident (*War* 1. 21) and was indeed responsible for rebuilding the Jewish Temple at no small

personal expense (*War* 1. 21. 1). Since it was done in the fifteenth year of his reign (i.e. ca. 18 B. C.) we know the age of the Temple spoken of in Gospel accounts (i.e. approx. 48-50 years).

d. Determined to increase his power and sphere of rule, he had Hyrcanus killed and thus removed any threat to the throne (*War* 1. 22. 1 (433)).

e. Herod was increasingly more tyrannical near the end of his career (*Ant.* 16. 11. 8; *War* 33). This may provide the background to the slaying of the children recorded in Matthew 2:16. Herod was certainly, according to Josephus, not only capable of such a horrible crime, but was indeed disposed toward such evil acts. Note: It appears that this terrible event is not recorded in Josephus.

f. It appears from Josephus that Archelaus, Herod's son who assumed leadership as Ethnarch over Judea, Samaria and Idumea in 4 B. C. (after Herod's death) was of similar character to his father. Josephus says that "Archelaus took possession of the ethnarchy, and used not the Jews only, but the Samaritans, also, barbarously" (*War* 2. 7.3) with the result that the Jews complained before Caesar and Archelaus was banished to Vienna, a city of Gaul (*Ant.* 17. 13). This portrait of Archelaus could account for why Joseph and Mary, upon their return from Egypt and hearing that Archelaus was reigning in place of his father, went straight to Nazareth in Galilee—outside the realm of Archelaus and the *fear* of danger (cf. Matt 2:22).

3. Roman Emperors

Josephus records facts about the Roman emperors which enable us to know more about them, their political lives and their relation to the Jewish nation through their appointed leaders. In this way, for example, when Luke mentions Caesar Augustus (2:1) or Tiberius Caesar (3:1) we know something of their character in general and perhaps can better understand how they might have influenced events going on in the N.T.

a. **Caesar Augustus:** Josephus speaks of Caesar Augustus on many occasions including his connections with Herod the Great and their relationship. Josephus explains how Herod's dominions were parceled out to his sons (*War* 2. 6. 3). This, in turn, accounts for the political state of affairs found in the Gospels after the death of Herod (see I. B. 2. e. above).

b. **Tiberius:** Tiberius Caesar was the emperor who placed Pontius Pilate as procurator over Judea (*War* 2. 9. 2). Pilate tried to erect “Ensigns” to Caesar in Jerusalem (*War* 2. 9. 2 (169)) and also spent money from the Temple treasury on construction of aqueducts (*War* 2. 9. 4). It is interesting to note that the Jews were indignant and greatly angered at this, yet when it came to crucifying one of their own, namely, Jesus Christ, they had no king but one—Caesar, and by implication his representative, Pilate (cf. John 19:15). If Christ died as late as A. D. 33 and Pilate’s impieties occurred around the beginning of his reign (A. D. 26) there would be no more than ten years between the events and perhaps even much less time. It appears that the Jewish people had very *convenient* memories.

c. **Gaius (Caius/Caligula):** Caius ruled as emperor from A. D. 37-41 during the fledgling years of the church—a church which was still basically comprised of Jews. During his reign he sent Petronius to invade Judea and erect a statue of Caesar in the Temple. If the Jews were unwilling, Petronius was to conquer them by war and then do erect the statue (*Ant.* 18. 2, ff.). The Jews said they would rather die than allow Caesar opportunity to place a statue of himself in their Temple. Their response is most noble and clearly demonstrates that they were still clinging to the Temple and their traditions in spite of the coming of Christ and the abrogation of the Law. One wonders how the Christians in Jerusalem, many of whom appear to have remained connected to the Temple for some time (cf. Acts 3 and Peter and John going to the Temple to pray) would have responded to this in the light of having many unsaved family members. Would they have given their lives for the Temple? Were they viewed as traitors if they decided not to help due to their new theological convictions? In any event, this incident illumines our understanding of the conditions and problems facing the Jews and the church in its early days. On a theological note, perhaps God wanted to use the situation to further separate the church from unbelieving Judaism. The destruction of the Temple by Titus some 30 years later seems to indicate that He had set the nation aside for a time and had begun to work through the church (cf. Romans 9-11; written around A.D. 57/58).

d. **Claudius:** Claudius reigned from A. D. 41-54 and is mentioned twice in the book of Acts. Luke records the prophet Agabus’ prediction that a famine was to come upon the land during the reign of Claudius (11:28). He also says that an edict was passed by Claudius expelling all the Jews from Rome (18:2). This occurred in A. D. 49-50 due to riots arising within the Jewish community over a certain *Chrestus* which may refer to

Christ or to some other person.² Josephus discusses Claudius and his relations with the Jews. He mentions a favorable pronouncement upon the Jews during a crisis involving them and the Greeks in the city of Alexandria (*Ant.* 19. 5. 2, 3). This edict, due to the fact that Herod Agrippa I was still living and king of Palestine, was sometime between A. D. 41-44, thus some 5 or 6 years before the expulsion. Again, we learn valuable information about the kind of world in which the early church grew and developed.

e. **Nero:** Nero reigned from A. D. 54-68, the time in which Paul was carrying out his missionary journeys and the church was really starting to grow and take on a distinctively Gentile flavor. According to Josephus, Nero was a barbarous individual (*Ant.* 20. 8. 3) who we know from other historians persecuted the church in Rome most severely (i.e. after the great fire) and was responsible for the death of the apostles Peter and Paul.³ Josephus' report adds yet another witness to this time period in which Nero reigned over the empire and made an impact upon the church and N. T. writings (cf. Romans 13; 1 Peter 2; the background to Hebrews).

f. **Vespasian/Titus:** Josephus goes into great deal about the events leading up to and including the fall of Jerusalem in A. D. 70 and the role played by Vespasian and Titus in the war (*War* 3-7).

4. Roman Prefects and Procurators

a. **Pontius Pilate:** Josephus describes many of the Roman prefects and procurators including Pontius Pilate, Antoninus Felix and Porcius Festus. Pontius Pilate was a Roman prefect who ruled Judea and Samaria from A. D. 26-36. Josephus describes how he slaughtered many Jews (*Ant.* 18. 3. 1, 2) and indeed passed sentence on Christ (*Ant.* 18. 3. 3).

b. **Antoninus Felix:** Felix was a Roman procurator who ruled over Judea and Samaria from A. D. 53-60. According to Josephus, Felix was so overwhelmed with passion for Drusilla, the wife of Azizus, that he went so far as to send a magician to her in order to convince her to marry him. So, Drusilla divorced her husband and married Felix, thus "transgressing the laws of her forefathers" (*Ant.* 20. 7. 2). Luke tells us that Paul discussed such things as righteousness and self-control with Felix (and his wife together) which caused him much fear (Acts 24:25). No doubt that Felix was afraid due to his wife and the many other vile crimes he committed against the Jews. In this case it is probable that Josephus gives

us pertinent background information that enlightens our understanding of this particular N. T. text.

c. **Porcius Festus:** Josephus also mentions Festus' rule (A. D. 60-62; *Ant.* 20. 8. 9) after Felix. The fact that Festus replaced Felix, according to Josephus, seems to be in agreement with Luke in Acts 24:27.

5. Several Other Areas of Contribution

Josephus also provides insight and background to several other figures or institutions as seen in the New Testament. He speaks about the Jewish religious sects of the Pharisees, Sadducees and the Essenes (*War* 2. 8. 2 ff.) as well as the institution of the Sanhedrin (*Ant.* 14. 9. 3). Josephus also fills in details about the tetrarchy of Philip (*War* 2. 6. 3; cf. Luke 3:1) and the institution of the High Priest (*Ant.* 5. 11. 5, etc.). He speaks about Jesus Christ, John the Baptist and James the brother of Jesus.

II. Two Parallel Incidents from Josephus and the New Testament

A. John the Baptist (*Ant.* 18. 5. 2; Matt 3:1-12; Mark 1:3-8; Luke 3:2-17; John 1:6-8 and 19-28.

1. Main Points in Agreement

- a. Josephus, and Matthew and Mark, refer to John as the *Baptist*.
- b. Josephus says that John commanded the Jews to exercise virtue, that is, righteousness toward one another and piety toward God. Matthew says that John taught those baptized to bring forth fruit in keeping with repentance. Luke says the same thing basically and carries it a bit further by offering examples of what repentance might look like (i.e. sharing tunics; collecting the proper amount of taxes; soldiers using force properly and not for dishonest gain; no bearing false testimony against another).
- c. Many crowds, according to Josephus, came to listen to his words. Matthew, Mark, Luke say that great multitudes followed John and were baptized by him. John says the Jews sent priests and Levites to question him.
- d. Josephus seems to indicate that John's followers were very dedicated to him (118). John's followers, according to the Gospels, and Acts 19 were very dedicated to him and his message.

e. According to Josephus, Herod had John sent to prison in Macherus [on the east side of the Dead Sea] and there had him put to death. The Gospel writers affirm that John was put in prison by Herod, though they do not indicate where.

2. Main Points in Disagreement

a. Josephus says that some Jews thought that the destruction of Herod's army was due to his killing of John—a judgment of God. The Gospel writers record no such interpretation of Herod's defeat. There is no record in any of the four Gospels that God had Herod's armies destroyed as a result of him killing John unjustly.

b. Josephus does not give the area of John's ministry, but the Gospel writers taken together indicate that John ministered outside of Antipas' territory, in Jerusalem, Judea and neighboring areas (e. g. areas around the Jordan).

c. In Josephus, Herod Antipas feared John because he thought that with the people following him John might lead a rebellion. Herod wanted to put him to death on the grounds of suspicion and nothing more. The Gospel writers say that Herod wanted to kill John because John preached against his unlawful marriage with Herodias. In the end, it was the whim of Herodias, conspiring with her daughter, which led to John's death (Matt 14:3ff; Mark 6:17ff; Luke 3:19, 20).

d. Josephus says that John's baptism was not for the remission of sins, but was for the purification of the body due to the fact that the soul was already purified by the people's return to righteousness prior to coming for John's baptism. The Gospel writers appear to unanimously indicate that John's baptism of repentance was for the remission of sins and Matthew and Mark state that people were confessing their sins to John, meaning they had no previous righteousness per se, at least as Josephus seems to indicate.

e. Josephus does not connect John with Jesus Christ. All the Gospel writers make the connection in no uncertain terms.

3. Conclusion

The main areas of agreement are substantial enough to provide the basis for an attempt to harmonize the areas of disagreement. Points (a) and (b) under areas of disagreement do not concern the essential story and as such really do not pose a

problem. Point (c) above is really no contradiction—both could be true at the same time. Perhaps Herod was nervous about the sizable crowds following John and combined with the fact that John openly condemned Herod's marriage, thus weakening Herod's position among the people, caused Herod to want to kill him. Herodias' daughter was really just the occasion for the act.

Point (d) above, where Josephus says that John's baptism was for the purification of the body and not for the remission of sins, seems to be at odds somewhat with the Gospel accounts. Given the accuracy of the Gospel accounts, it would seem that Josephus was not entirely accurate in what he thought about John's ministry. Whatever sources he used, they seem to represent a slightly different tradition than the Gospel writers. The fact too, that Josephus records only general statements with regards to John's ethic and the Gospel writers, on the other hand, record detailed descriptions of his injunctions, makes me think that the Gospel writers were privy to the actual details of the message. Of course, Josephus was not even born when John preached, yet the Gospel writers may have indeed listened to John firsthand.

Further, Josephus appears to have had the habit of referring to "Jewish ethical responsibility" as "piety and justice." If this is indeed the case, as Mason affirms, then it would appear that Josephus' only real concern is to present John as a very ethical Jewish person—thus he inserts his formula, "piety and justice"—not necessarily to stress the details of his message. Perhaps this accounts in part for the different purpose ascribed to John's baptism on the side of the Gospel writers as opposed to that offered by Josephus.

The last point (e) has caused problems for certain scholars. Steve Mason thinks that the Gospel writers have annexed John for their own purposes beyond anything which the Baptist envisioned. According to Mason, they had more of a motive to use John to this end than does Josephus for his ends. Thus Josephus' portrait of the Baptist more closely resembles John as he was. Further, Mason claims that traces in the N.T. of the real John appear in: 1) John's wondering whether Jesus was the Christ and 2) the disciples of John in Ephesus who did not know about Jesus or the Holy Spirit (cf. Acts 19:1-7). These incidents says Mason, point to the "integrity" of John over and against his representation by the Gospel writers as a forerunner to Messiah.

There appear to be several problems with this view. While there is no doubt that the Scriptures are in a sense propaganda, it is another thing to affirm that what they appear to report as history is really a misrepresentation of history. It is John the Baptist who historically affirmed his connection with Jesus; and the Gospel writers record this tradition—unless of course, the Gospel writers are putting

words into the mouth of John that he never spoke or intended. If this is the case, then how do we know anything affirmed as historical in Scripture really is true to fact?

Mason's use of the incident described in Acts 19:1-7 to support the identity and message of the true John will not stand, for it presupposes that these disciples correctly understood John. But the text clearly indicates that they did not. Paul explicitly told them that part of John's message was to believe in the one coming after him (19:4). Thus, the disciples' understanding of John's message, in contrast to what Mason affirms, was wrong. Therefore it cannot be used to recreate a "John" that stands outside the tradition of the Gospel writers. In fact, it works completely the opposite; it further confirms the Gospel presentation of John as the one who preceded the Messiah.

It is not necessary to set Josephus at odds with the New Testament writers on this point. Josephus, as one not in the Christian movement, did not associate the two men—perhaps he did not realize their relationship. If he did know of it, perhaps it did not suit his purpose in writing to join them for the reader at that time. His interest in his writing is not to catalogue the beginnings and developments within Christianity—he is perhaps more interested, as Mason affirms, in developing an apologetic for the Jewish people.

B. Jesus and Pilate

Josephus mentions Jesus Christ (i.e. the so-called *Testimonium Flavinium*) in two passages: *Ant.* 18. 3 . 3 and 20. 9. 1.

There does not appear to be anything in both of Josephus' accounts that would necessarily disagree with the Gospel writers. The problem seems to be whether Josephus actually penned the final form of the first passage (i.e. *Ant.* 18. 3 . 3) as we have it today. The opinion of scholars, since the sixteenth century or so, has been divided. Some say that the saying as a whole is authentic. Others say that parts of the saying are from the hand of Josephus and that parts are Christian additions. And, thirdly, there are those who regard the whole statement as spurious—totally a Christian interpolation. It is found in three manuscripts.

I believe that the text preserves some of Josephus' own words which were later added to by a Christian copyist(s). I think the basic text of Josephus was as follows:

At about this time lived Jesus, a wise man. . . he was a teacher of such people as accept the truth with pleasure. He won over many Jews and many of the Greeks. . . When Pilate, upon an indictment brought by the principal men among us,¹⁴

condemned him to the cross, those who had loved him from the very first did not cease to be attached to him. And the tribe of the Christians, so-called after him, has to this day still not disappeared.

I think that the following phrases were most likely written by Christian(s):

1) “if indeed one might call him a wise man. . . For. . . accomplished surprising feats” This seems to imply that the writer believed something more about Jesus—that he was more than a mere mortal. Since it appears that Josephus never became a Christian it is hard to believe that he would write such a statement as a Jew. In other words, these sound like statements that might come from a Christian.

2) “He was the Messiah” (i.e. he was called the Christ) seems a bit strong for a Jewish historian to say about Jesus and more likely the work of a Christian. It appears to be a declaration of faith.

3) “On the third day. . . concerning him.” This is so unlikely to be from Josephus because it speaks with assurance of Jesus’ resurrection. It does not say that the Christians claimed this to be true. The text implies that Josephus held it to be true. This is quite unlikely, especially given the fact that he didn’t even say a single word of interpretation about it. For such an incredible assertion to be made, without explanation, implies its unequivocal acceptance—hardly the position of Josephus.

Overall, I think that the record in Josephus contains his words, as shown above, with the addition of Christian “testimony.” Whatever one holds concerning the *Testimonium Flavianum*, one still must ask the question, “What is the value to anyone of determining its authorship?” Does anything really stand or fall on determining who wrote it? The historical conception of the person to whom the statement witnesses (i.e. Jesus) is unaltered by the passage, no matter who wrote it, and this is further confirmed by the fact that it agrees with the Gospel accounts.

III. The Historical Reliability of Josephus

The question of the historical reliability of Josephus can only be answered by attempting to correlate what he asserts in his writings with other sources (some of which he used), whether literature, archaeology, etc. And, when no such external knowledge exists to confirm or deny his report, we must consider internal evidence, his habits, what kind of man he says he was, etc. to see whether certain of his claims are credible. At this point we are closer to guessing than in the first situation.

Given the above canons, it is no mystery that many scholars hold that Josephus is woefully inaccurate at times. And, it would appear from the work of Schurer, Broshi, Mason, Mosley and Yamauchi that such a conclusion is fairly warranted. Yet this skepticism does not need to be thorough-going, for there are many places where it appears that he has left for us a solid record of people and events—especially as regards the broad movements in history at this time. These might include facts about the Herodian dynasty, the nature of the Jewish religious sects, Roman rule over Palestine and the fall of Jerusalem. Boshì agrees that in many places Josephus errs, regarding numbers and names, but this is no grounds for dismissing all that he said as without foundation. Once again, the historical trustworthiness of Josephus, is perhaps not a flat declaration, “he is” or “he is not” but rather it proceeds on a case by case basis.

Philo of Alexandria (c. 20 B.C.E.—40 C.E.)

Philo of Alexandria, a Hellenized Jew also called Judaeus Philo, is a figure that spans two cultures, the Greek and the Hebrew. When Hebrew mythical thought met Greek philosophical thought in the first century B.C.E. it was only natural that someone would try to develop speculative and philosophical justification for Judaism in terms of Greek philosophy. Thus Philo produced a synthesis of both traditions developing concepts for future Hellenistic interpretation of messianic Hebrew thought, especially by Clement of Alexandria, Christian Apologists like Athenagoras, Theophilus, Justin Martyr, Tertullian, and by Origen. He may have influenced Paul, his contemporary, and perhaps the authors of the Gospel of John (C. H. Dodd) and the Epistle to the Hebrews (R. Williamson and H. W. Attridge). In the process, he laid the foundations for the development of Christianity in the West and in the East, as we know it today. Philo's primary importance is in the development of the philosophical and theological foundations of Christianity. The church preserved the Philonic writings because Eusebius of Caesarea labeled the monastic ascetic group of Therapeutae and Therapeutrides, described in Philo's *The Contemplative Life*, as Christians, which is highly unlikely. Eusebius also promoted the legend that Philo met Peter in Rome. Jerome (345-420 C.E.) even lists him as a church Father. Jewish tradition was uninterested in philosophical speculation and did not preserve Philo's thought. According to H. A. Wolfson, Philo was a founder of religious philosophy, a new habit of practicing philosophy. Philo was thoroughly educated in Greek philosophy and culture as can be seen from his superb knowledge of classical Greek literature. He had a deep reverence for Plato and referred to him as "the most holy Plato" (*Prob.* 13). Philo's philosophy represented contemporary Platonism which was its revised version incorporating Stoic doctrine and terminology via Antiochus of Ascalon (ca 90 B.C.E.) and Eudorus of Alexandria, as well as elements of Aristotelian logic and ethics and

Pythagorean ideas. Clement of Alexandria even called Philo "the Pythagorean." But it seems that Philo also picked up his ancestral tradition, though as an adult, and once having discovered it, he put forward the teachings of the Jewish prophet, Moses, as "the summit of philosophy" (*Op.* 8), and considered Moses the teacher of Pythagoras (b. ca 570 B.C.E.) and of all Greek philosophers and lawgivers (Hesiod, Heraclitus, Lycurgus, to mention a few). For Philo, Greek philosophy was a natural development of the revelatory teachings of Moses. He was no innovator in this matter because already before him Jewish scholars attempted the same. Artapanus in the second century B.C.E identified Moses with Musaeus and with Orpheus. According to Aristobulus of Paneas (first half of the second century B.C.E.), Homer and Hesiod drew from the books of Moses which were translated into Greek long before the Septuagint.

1. Life

Very little is known about the life of Philo. He lived in Alexandria, which at that time counted, according to some estimates, about one million people and included largest Jewish community outside of Palestine. He came from a wealthy and the prominent family and appears to be a leader in his community. Once he visited Jerusalem and the temple, as he himself stated in *Prov.* 2.64. Philo's brother, Alexander, was a wealthy, prominent Roman government official, a custom agent responsible for collecting dues on all goods imported into Egypt from the East. He donated money to plate the gates of the temple in Jerusalem with gold and silver. He also made a loan to Herod Agrippa I, grandson of Herod the Great. Alexander's two sons, Marcus and Tiberius Julius Alexander were involved in Roman affairs. Marcus married Bernice, the daughter of Herod Agrippa I, who is mentioned in Acts (25:13, 23; 26:30). The other son, Tiberius Julius Alexander, described by Josephus as "not remaining true to his ancestral practices" became procurator of the province of Judea (46-48 C.E.) and prefect of Egypt (66-70 C.E.). Philo was involved in the affairs of his community which interrupted his contemplative life (*Spec. leg.* 3.1-6), especially during the crisis relating to the pogrom which was initiated in 38 C.E. by the prefect Flaccus, during the reign of emperor Gaius Caligula. He was elected to head the Jewish delegation, which apparently included his brother Alexander and nephew Tiberius Julius Alexander, and was sent to Rome in 39-40 B.C.E. to see the emperor. He reported the events in his writings *Against Flaccus* and *The Embassy to Gaius*.

2. Philo's Works and Their Classification

The major part of Philo's writings consists of philosophical essays dealing with the main themes of biblical thought that present a systematic and precise

exposition of his views. One has the impression that he attempted to show that the philosophical Platonic or Stoic ideas were nothing but the deductions made from the biblical verses of Moses. Philo was not an original thinker, but he was well acquainted with the entire range of Greek philosophical traditions through the original texts. If there are gaps in his knowledge, they are rather in his Jewish tradition as evidenced by his relying on the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible. In his attempt to reconcile the Greek way of thinking with his Hebrew tradition he had antecedents such as Pseudo-Aristeas and Aristobulus.

Philo's works are divided into three categories:

1. The first group comprises writings that paraphrase the biblical texts of Moses: *On Abraham*, *On the Decalogue*, *On Joseph*, *The Life of Moses*, *On the Creation of the World*, *On Rewards and Punishments*, *On the Special Laws*, *On the Virtues*. A series of works include allegorical explanations of Genesis 2-41: *On Husbandry*, *On the Cherubim*, *On the Confusion of Tongues*, *On the Preliminary Studies*, *The Worse Attacks the Better*, *On Drunkenness*, *On Flight and Finding*, *On the Giants*, *Allegorical Interpretation* (Allegory of the Law), *On the Migration of Abraham*, *On the Change of Names*, *On Noah's Work as a Planter*, *On the Posterity and Exile of Cain*, *Who is the Heir*, *On the Unchangeableness of God*, *On the Sacrifices of Abel and Cain*, *On Sobriety*, *On Dreams*. Here belong also: *Questions and Answers on Genesis* and *Questions and Answers on Exodus* (aside from fragments preserved only in Armenian).
2. A series of works classified as philosophical treatises: *Every Good Man is Free* (a sequel of which had the theme that every bad man is a slave, which did not survive); *On the Eternity of the World*; *On Providence* (except for lengthy fragments preserved in Armenian); *Alexander or On Whether Brute Animals Possess Reason* (preserved only in Armenian) and called in Latin *De Animalibus* (On the Animals); a brief fragment *De Deo* (On God), preserved only in Armenian is an exegesis of Genesis 18, and belongs to the *Allegory of the Law*.
3. The third group includes historical-apologetic writings: *Hypothetica* or *Apologia Pro Judaeos* which survives only in two Greek extracts quoted by Eusebius. The first extract is a rationalistic version of Exodus giving a eulogic account of Moses and a summary of Mosaic constitution contrasting its severity with the laxity of the gentile laws; the second extract describes the Essenes. The other apologetic essays include *Against Flaccus*, *The Embassy to Gaius*, and *On the Contemplative Life*. But all these works are related to Philo's explanations of the texts of Moses.

3. Technique of Exposition

Philo uses an allegorical technique for interpretation of the Hebrew myth and in this he follows the Greek tradition of Theagenes of Rhegium (second half of the sixth century B.C.E.). Theagenes used this approach in defense of Homer's theology against the detractors. He said that the myths of gods struggling with each other referred to the opposition between the elements; the names of gods were made to refer to various dispositions of the soul, e.g., Athena was reflection, Aphrodite, desire, Hermes, elocution. Anaxagoras, too, explained the Homeric poems as discussions of virtue and justice. The Sophist Prodicus of Ceos (b. 470 B.C.E.), contemporary of Socrates, interpreted the gods of Homeric stories as personifications of those natural substances that are useful to human life [e.g., bread and Demeter, wine and Dionysus, water and Poseidon, fire and Hephaestus]. He also employed ethical allegory. His treatise, *The Seasons*, contains a Parable of Heracles, paraphrased in Xenophon's *Memorabilia* (2.1.21-34), which tells the story of Heracles who, at crossroad, was attracted by Virtue and Vice in the form of two women of great stature (*Sacr.* 20-44). The allegory was used by the cynic Antisthenes (contemporary of Plato) and Diogenes the Cynic. Stoics expanded the Cynics' use of Homeric allegory in the interest of their philosophical system. Using this allegorical method, Philo seeks out the hidden message beneath the surface of any particular text and tries to read back a new doctrine into the work of the past. In a similar way Plutarch allegorized the ancient Egyptian mythology giving it a new meaning. But in some aspects of Jewish life Philo defends the literal interpretation of his tradition as in the debate on circumcision or the Sabbath (*Mig.* 89-93; *Spec. leg.* 1.1-11). Though he acknowledges the symbolic meaning of these rituals, he insists on their literal interpretation.

4. Emphasis on Contemplative Life and Philosophy

The key emphasis in Philo's philosophy is contrasting the spiritual life, understood as intellectual contemplation, with the mundane preoccupation with earthly concerns, either as an active life or as a search for pleasure. Philo disdained the material world and physical body (*Spec. leg.* 3.1-6). The body was for Philo as for Plato, "an evil and a dead thing" (LA 3.72-74; *Gig.* 15), wicked by nature and a plotter against the soul (LA 3.69). But it was a necessary evil, hence Philo does not advocate a complete abnegation from life. On the contrary he advocates fulfilling first the practical obligations toward men and the use of mundane possessions for the accomplishment of praiseworthy works (*Fug.* 23-28; *Plant.* 167-168). Similarly he considers pleasure indispensable and wealth useful, but for a virtuous man they are not a perfect good (LA 3.69-72). He believed that men should steer themselves away from the physical aspect of

things gradually. Some people, like philosophers, may succeed in focusing their minds on the eternal realities. Philo believed that man's final goal and ultimate bliss is in the "knowledge of the true and living God" (*Decal.* 81; *Abr.* 58; *Praem.* 14); "such knowledge is the boundary of happiness and blessedness" (*Det.* 86). To him, mystic vision allows our soul to see the Divine Logos (*Ebr.* 152) and achieve a union with God (*Deut.* 30:19-20; *Post.* 12). In a desire to validate the scripture as an inspired writing, he often compares it to prophetic ecstasy (*Her.* 69-70). His praise of the contemplative life of the monastic Therapeutae in Alexandria attests to his preference of *bios theoreticos* over *bios practicos*. He adheres to the Platonic picture of the souls descending into the material realm and that only the souls of philosophers are able to come to the surface and return to their realm in heaven (*Gig.* 12-15). Philo adopted the Platonic concept of the soul with its tripartite division. The rational part of the soul, however, is breathed into man as a part of God's substance. Philo speaks figuratively "Now, when we are alive, we are so though our soul is dead and buried in our body, as if in a tomb. But if it were to die, then our soul would live according to its proper life being released from the evil and dead body to which it is bound" (*Op.* 67-69; LA 1.108).

5. Philosophy and Wisdom: a Path to Ethical Life

Philo differentiated between philosophy and wisdom. To him philosophy is "the greatest good thing to men" (*Op.* 53-54), which they acquired because of a gift of reason from God (*Op.* 77). It is a devotion to wisdom, and a way to acquire the highest knowledge, "an attentive study of wisdom." Wisdom in turn is "the knowledge of all divine and human things, and of the respective causes of them" that is, according to Philo, contained in the Torah (*Congr.* 79). Hence it follows that Moses, as the author of the Torah, "had reached the very summit of philosophy" and "had learnt from the oracles of God the most numerous and important of the principles of nature" (*Op.* 8). Moses was also the interpreter of nature (*Her.* 213). By saying this Philo wanted to indicate that human wisdom has two origins: one is divine, the other is natural (*Her.* 182). Moreover, that Mosaic Law is not inconsistent with nature. A single law, the Logos of nature governs the entire world (*Jos.* 28-31) and its law is imprinted on the human mind (*Prob.* 46-47). Because of this we have a conscience that affects even wicked persons (QG 4.62). Wisdom is a consummated philosophy and as such has to be in agreement with the principles of nature (*Mos.* 2.48; *Abr.* 16; *Op.* 143; *Spec. leg.* 2.13; 3.46-47, 112, 137; *Virt.* 18). The study of philosophy has as its end "life in accordance with nature" and following the "path of right reason" (*Mig.* 128). Philosophy prepares us to a moral life, i.e., "to live in conformity with nature" (*Prob.* 160). From this follows that life in accordance with nature hastens us towards virtues (*Mos.* 2. 181; *Abr.* 60, *Spec. leg.* 1.155), and an unjust

man is the one "who transgresses the ordinances of nature" (*Spec. leg.* 4.204; Cf. *Decal.* 132; *Virt.* 131-132; *Plant.* 49; *Ebr.* 142; *Agr.* 66). Thus Philo does not discount human reason, but contrasts only the true doctrine which is trust in God with uncertain, plausible, and unreliable reasoning (LA 3.228-229).

6. Philo's Ethical Doctrine

Philo's ethical doctrine is Stoic in its essence and includes the active effort to achieve virtue, the model of a sage to be followed, and practical advice concerning the achievement of the proper right reason and a proper emotional state of rational emotions (*eupatheia*). To Philo man is basically passive and it is God who sows noble qualities in the soul, thus we are instruments of God (LA 2.31-32; *Cher.* 127-128). Still man is the only creature endowed with freedom to act though his freedom is limited by the constitution of his mind. As such he is responsible for his action and "very properly receives blame for the offences which he designedly commits." This is so because he received a faculty of voluntary motion and is free from the dominion of necessity (*Deus* 47-48). Philo advocates the practice of virtue in both the divine and the human spheres. Lovers only of God and lovers only of men are both incomplete in virtue. Philo advocates a middle harmonious way (*Decal.* 106-110; *Spec. leg.* 4. 102). He differentiates four virtues: wisdom, self-control, courage, and justice (LA 1.63-64). Human dispositions Philo divides into three groups – the best is given the vision of God, the next has a vision on the right i.e., the Beneficent or Creative Power whose name is God, and the third has a vision on the left, i.e., the Ruling Power called Lord (*Abr.* 119-130). Felicity is achieved in the culmination of three values: the spiritual, the corporeal, and the external (QG 3.16). Philo adopts the Stoic wise man as a model for human behavior. Such a wise man should imitate God who was impassible (*apathes*) hence the sage should achieve a state of *apatheia*, i.e., he should be free of irrational emotions (passions), pleasure, desire, sorrow, and fear, and should replace them by rational or well-reasoned emotions (*eupatheia*), joy, will, compunction, and caution. In such a state of *eupatheia*, the sage achieves a serene, stable, and joyful disposition in which he is directed by reason in his decisions (QG 2.57; *Abr.* 201-204; *Fug.* 166-167; *Mig.* 67). But at the same time Philo claims that the needs of the body should not be neglected and rejects the other extreme, i.e., the practice of austerities. Everything should be governed by reason, self-control, and moderation. Joy and pleasure do not have intrinsic values, but are by-products of virtue and characterize the sage (*Fug.* 25-34; *Det.* 124-125; LA 80).

7. Philo's Mysticism and Transcendence of God

Mysticism is a doctrine that maintains that one can gain knowledge of reality that is not accessible to sense perception or to reason. It is usually associated with some mental and physical training and in the theistic version it involves a sensation of closeness to or unity with God experienced as temporal and spatial transcendence. According to Philo, man's highest union with God is limited to God's manifestation as the Logos. It is similar to a later doctrine of intellectual contact of our human intellect with the transcendent intellect developed by Alexander of Aphrodisias and Ibn Rushd and different from the Plotinian doctrine of the absorption into the ineffable one. The notion of the utter transcendence of the First Principle probably goes back as far as Anaximander who postulated the Indefinite (*apeiron*) as this Principle (*arche*) and could be found in Plato's concept of the Good, but the formulation is accredited to Speusippus, the successor of Plato in the Academy. Philo's biblical tradition in which one could not name or describe God was the major factor in accepting the Greek Platonic concepts and emphasis on God's transcendence. But this position is rather alien to biblical and rabbinical understanding. In the Bible, God is represented in a "material" and "physical" way. Philosophically, however, Philo differentiated between the existence of God, which could be demonstrated, and the nature of God which humans are not able to cognize. God's essence is beyond any human experience or cognition, therefore it can be described only by stating what God is not (*via negativa*) or by depriving him of any attribute of sensible objects and putting God beyond any attribute applicable to a sensible world (*via eminentiae*) because God alone is a being whose existence is his essence (*Det.* 160). Philo states in many places that God's essence is one and single, that he does not belong to any class or that there is in God any distinction of genus and species. Therefore, we cannot say anything about his qualities "For God is not only devoid of peculiar qualities, but he is likewise not of the form of man" (LA 1.36); he "is free from distinctive qualities" (LA 1.51; 3.36; *Deus* 55). Strictly speaking, we cannot make any positive or negative statements about God: "Who can venture to affirm that ... he is a body, or that he is incorporeal, or that he has such and such distinctive qualities, or that he has no such qualities? ... But he alone can utter a positive assertion respecting himself, since he alone has an accurate knowledge of his own nature" (LA 3.206). Moreover, since the essence of God is single, therefore its property must be one which Philo denotes as acting "Now it is an especial attribute of God to create, and this faculty it is impious to ascribe to any created being" (*Cher.* 77). The expression of this act of God, which is at the same time his thinking, is his Logos (*Prov.* 1.7; *Sacr.* 65; *Mos.* 1.283). Though God is hidden, his reality is made manifest by the Logos that is God's image (*Somn.* 1.239; *Conf.* 147-148) and by the sensible universe, which in turn is the image of the Logos, that is "the archetypal

model, the idea of ideas" (*Op.* 25). Because of this we can perceive God's existence, though we cannot fathom his essence. But there are degrees and levels to our cognizance of God. Those at the summit and the highest level may grasp the unity of the powers of God, at the lower level people recognize the Logos as the Regent Power, and those still at the lowest level, immersed in the sensible world are unable to perceive the intelligible reality (*Fug.* 94; *Abr.* 124-125). Steps in mystic experience involve a realization of human nothingness, a realization that the one who acts is God alone, and abandonment of our sense of perception (*Her.* 69-71; *Plant.* 64; *Conf.* 95; *Ebr.* 152). A mystic state will produce a sensation of tranquility, and stability; it appears suddenly and is described as a sober intoxication (*Gig.* 49; *Sacr.* 78; *Somn.* 1.71; *Op.* 70-71).

8. Source of Intuition of the Infinite Reality

According to Philo the highest knowledge man may have is the knowledge of infinite reality which is not accessible by the normal senses, but by unmediated intuition of divinity. Humans were endowed with the mind, i.e., ability to reason and the outward senses. We received the first in order that we might consider the things that are discernable only by the intellect, the end of which is truth, and the second for the perception of visible things the end of which is opinion. Opinions are unstable, based on probability, and untrustworthy. Thus by this divine gift men are able to come to a conclusion about the existence of the divinity. They can do it in two ways: one is the apprehension of God through contemplation of his creation and forming a "conjectural conception of the Creator by a probable train of reasoning" (*Praem.* 43). And in the process the soul may climb the ladder to perfection by using natural means i.e., natural dispositions, instruction, i.e., being educated to virtue, or by meditation. The other is a direct apprehension by being instructed by God himself when the mind elevates itself above the physical world and perceives the uncreated One through a clear vision (*Praem.* 28-30, 40-66; *LA* 97-103). This vision is accessible to the "purified mind" to which God appears as One. To the mind uninitiated in the mysteries, unable to apprehend God alone by himself, but only through his actions, God appears as a triad constituted by him and his two powers, Creative and Royal (*Abr.* 97-103). Such a direct vision of God is not dependent on revelation but is possible because we have an impression of God in our mind, which is nothing but a tiny fragment of the Logos pervading the whole universe, not separated from its source, but only extended (*Det.* 90; *Gig.* 27; *LA* 1.37; *Mut.* 223; *Spec. leg.* 4.123). And we receive this portion of the Divine Mind at birth being endowed with a mind which makes us resemble God (*Op.* 65-69). At birth two powers enter every soul, the salutary (Beneficent) and the destructive (Unbounded). The world is created through these same powers. The creation is accomplished when " the salutary and beneficent (power) brings to an end the unbounded and

destructive nature." Similarly, one or the other power may prevail in humans, but when the salutary power "brings to an end the unbounded and destructive nature" humans achieve immortality. Thus both the world and humans are a mixture of these powers and the prevailing one has the moral determination: "For the souls of foolish men have the unbounded and destructive rather than the powerful and salutary [power], and it is full of misery when it dwells with earthly creatures. But the prudent and noble [soul] receives the powerful and salutary [power] and, on the contrary, possesses in itself good fortune and happiness" (QE 1.23). Philo evidently analyzes these two powers on two levels. One is the divine level in which the Unlimited or the Unbounded is a representation of God's infinite and immeasurable goodness and creativity. The Logos keeps it in balance through the Limit. The other level is the human one where the Unlimited or the Unbounded represents destruction and everything morally abhorrent. Human reason is able, however, to maintain in it some kind of balance. This mind, divine and immortal, is an additional and differentiating part of the human soul which animates man just like the souls of animals which are devoid of mind. The notion of God's existence is thus imprinted in our mind that needs only some illumination to have a direct vision of God (*Abr.* 79-80; *Det.* 86-87; *LA* 1.38). Thus we can arrive at it through the dialectical reasoning as apprehension of the First Principle. Philo differentiates two modes for perceiving God, an inferential mode and a direct mode without mediation: "As long, therefore, as our mind still shines around and hovers around, pouring as it were a noontide light into the whole soul, we, being masters of ourselves, are not possessed by any extraneous influence" (*Her.* 264). Thus this direct mode is not in any way a type of inspiration or inspired prophecy; it is unlike "inspiration" when a "trance" or a "heaven-inflicted madness" seizes us and divine light sets as it happens "to the race of prophets" (*Her.* 265).

9. Philo's Doctrine of Creation

Philo attempts to bridge the Greek "scientific" or rational philosophy with the strictly mythical ideology of the Hebrew scriptures. As a basis for the "scientific" approach he uses the worldview presented by Plato in *Timaeus* which remained influential in Hellenistic times. The characteristic feature of the Greek scientific approach is the biological interpretation of the physical world in anthropocentric terms, in terms of purpose and function that may apply to biological and psychological realities but may not be applied to the physical world. Moreover, Philo operates often on two levels: the level of mythical Hebraic religious tradition and the level of philosophical speculation in the Greek tradition. Nevertheless, Philo attempts to harmonize the Mosaic and Platonic accounts of the generation of the world by interpreting the biblical story using Greek scientific categories and concepts. He elaborates a religious-

philosophical worldview that became the foundation for the future Christian doctrine. Philo's doctrine of creation is intertwined with his doctrine of God and it answers two crucial questions: 1. Was the world created *ex nihilo* or from primordial matter? 2. Was creation a temporal act or is it an eternal process?

a. Philo's Model of Creation

Though Philo's model of creation comes from Plato's *Timaeus*, the direct agent of creation is not God himself (described in Plato as Demiurge, Maker, Artificer), but the Logos. Philo believes that the Logos is "the man of God" (*Conf.* 41) or the shadow of God that was used as an instrument and a pattern of all creation (LA 3.96). The Logos converted unqualified, unshaped preexistent matter, which Philo describes as "destitute of arrangement, of quality, of animation, of distinctive character and full of disorder and confusion," (*Op.* 22) into four primordial elements:

For it is out of that essence that God created everything, without indeed touching it himself, for it was not lawful for the all-wise and all-blessed God to touch materials which were all misshapen and confused, but he created them by the agency of his incorporeal powers, of which the proper name is Ideas, which he so exerted that every genus received its proper form (LA 1.329).

According to Philo, Moses anticipated Plato by teaching that water, darkness, and chaos existed before the world came into being (*Op.* 22). Moses, having reached the philosophy summit, recognized that there are two fundamental principles of being, one, "an active cause, the intellect of the universe." The other is passive, "inanimate and incapable of motion by any intrinsic power of its own" (*Op.* 8-9), matter, lifeless and motionless. But Philo is ambiguous in such statements as these: "God, who created all things, not only brought them all to light, but he has even created what before had no existence, not only being their maker, but also their founder" (*Somn.* 1.76; *Op.* 81); "God who created the whole universe out of things that had no previous existence..." (LA 3.10). It seems that Philo does not refer here to God's creation of the visible world *ex nihilo* but to his creation of the intelligible Forms prior to the formation of the sensible world (*Spec. leg.* 1.328). Philo reasons that by analogy to the biblical version of the creation of man in the image of God, so the visible world as such must have been created in the image of its archetype present in the mind of God. "It is manifest also, that that archetypal seal, which we call that world which is perceptible only to the intellect, must itself be the archetypal model, the Idea of Ideas, the Logos of God" (*Op.* 25). In his doctrine of God Philo interprets the Logos, which is the Divine Mind as the Form of Forms (Platonic), the Idea of Ideas or the sum total of Forms or Ideas (*Det.* 75-76). The Logos is an

indestructible Form of wisdom. Interpreting the garment of the high priest (*Exod.* 28:34; 36) Philo states: "But the seal is an Idea of Ideas, according to which God fashioned the world, being an incorporeal Idea, comprehensible only by the intellect" (*Mig.* 103). The invisible intelligible world which was used by the Logos as a model for creation or rather formation of the visible world from the (preexisting) unformed matter was created in the mind of God: "The incorporeal world then was already completed, having its seat in the Divine Logos and the world, perceptible by the external senses, was made on the model of it" (*Op.* 36). Describing Moses' account of the creation of man, Philo states also that Moses calls the invisible Divine Logos the Image of God (*Op.* 24; 31; *LA* 1.9). Forms, though inapprehensible in essence, leave an impress and a copy and procure qualities and shapes to shapeless things and unorganized matter. Mind can grasp the Forms by longing for wisdom. "The desire for wisdom alone is continual and incessant, and it fills all its pupils and disciples with famous and most beautiful doctrines" (*Spec. leg.* 1-45-50). Creation thus took place from preexistent shapeless matter (Plato's Receptacle) which is "the nurse of all becoming and change" and for this creation God used the Forms which are his powers (*Spec. leg.* 1.327-329). This may seem a controversial point whether the primordial matter was preexistent or was created *ex nihilo*. Philo's view is not clearly stated and there are seemingly contradictory statements. In some places Philo states, "for as nothing is generated out of nothing, so neither can anything which exists be destroyed as to become non-existence" (*Aet.* 5-6). The same is repeated in his *De Specialibus legibus*: "Being made of us [i.e. elements] when you were born, you will again be dissolved into us when you come to die; for it is not the nature of any thing to be destroyed so as to become nonexistent, but the end brings it back to those elements from which its beginnings come" (*Spec.* 1.266). The resolution of this seeming controversy is to be found in Philo's theory of eternal creation, which is described next in connection with the Logos as the agent of creation. Philo, being a strict monist, could not accept the existence of independent and eternal preexistent matter (however disorganized and chaotic) as Plato did.

b. Eternal Creation

Philo denies the Aristotelian conclusion coming, according to him, from the superficial observation that the world existed from eternity, independent of any creative act. "For some men, admiring the world itself rather than the Creator of the world, have represented it as existing without any maker, and eternal, and as impiously and falsely have represented God as existing in a state of complete inactivity" (*Op.* 7). He elaborates instead his theory of the eternal creation (*Prov.* 1.6-9), as did Proclus (410-485 C.E.) much later in interpreting Plato. Proclus brilliantly demonstrated that even in the theistic system the world though

generated must be eternal, because the "world is always fabricated ... is always becoming to be." Proclus believed, as did Philo, that the corporeal world is always coming into existence but never possesses real being. Thus God, according to Philo, did not begin to create the world at a certain moment, but he is "eternally applying himself to its creation" (*Prov.* 1.7; *Op.* 7; *Aet.* 83-84).

But God is the creator of time also, for he is the father of his father, and the father of time is the world, which made its own mother the creation of time, so that time stands towards God in the relation of a grandson; for this world is a younger son of God, inasmuch as it is perceptible by the outward sense, for the only son he speaks of as older than the world, is Idea, and this is not perceptible by the intellect, but having thought the other worthy of the rights of primogeniture, he has decided that it should remain with him; therefore, this younger son, perceptible by the external senses being set in motion, has caused the nature of time to shine forth, and to become conspicuous, so that there is nothing future to God, who has the very boundaries of time subject to him; for their life is not time, but the beautiful model of eternity; and in eternity nothing is past and nothing is future, but everything is present only (*Deus.* 31-32).

Philo contends that God thinks simultaneously with his acting or creating. "For God while he spake the word, did at the same moment create; nor did he allow anything to come between the Logos and the deed; and if one may advance a doctrine which is pretty nearly true, His Logos is his deed" (*Sacr.* 65; *Mos.* 1.283). Thus any description of creation in temporal terms, e.g., by Moses, is not to be taken literally, but rather is an accommodation to the biblical language (*Op.* 19; *Mut.* 27; *LA* 2.9-13):

God is continuously ordering matter by his thought. His thinking was not anterior to his creating and there never was a time when he did not create, the Ideas themselves having been with him from the beginning. For God's will is not posterior to him, but is always with him, for natural motions never give out. Thus ever thinking he creates, and furnishes to sensible things the principle of their existence, so that both should exist together: the ever-creating Divine Mind and the sense-perceptible things to which beginning of being is given (*Prov.* 1.7).

Thus Philo postulates a crucial modification to the Platonic doctrine of the Forms, namely that God himself eternally creates the intelligible world of Ideas as his thoughts. The intelligible Forms are thus the principle of existence to the sensible things which are given through them their existence. This simply means in mystical terms that nothing exists or acts except God. On this ideal model

God then orders and shapes the formless matter through the agency of his Logos (*Her.* 134, 140) into the objects of the sensible world:

Now we must form a somewhat similar opinion of God [Philo makes an analogy to a plan of the city in the mind of its builder], who, having determined to found a mighty state, first of all conceived its form in his mind, according to which form he made a world perceptible only by the intellect, and then completed one visible to the external senses, using the first one as a model (*Op.* 19).

Philo claims a scriptural support for these metaphysics saying that the creation of the world was after the pattern of an intelligible world (Gen. 1:17) which served as its model. During the first day God created Ideas or Forms of heaven, earth, air (= darkness), empty space (= abyss), water, pneuma (= mind), light, the intelligible pattern of the sun and the stars (*Op.* 29). There are, however, differences between Philo and Plato: according to Plato, there is no Form of space (*chora*). In Plato space is not apprehended by reason; rather it had its own special status in the world. Also pneuma as a Form of soul does not exist in the system of Plato. Plato designates this primordial unorganized state of matter a self-existing Receptacle; it is most stable and a permanent constituent: "It must be called always the same, for it never departs at all from its own character" (Plato, *Timaeus* 50b-c). Philo, being a strict monist could not allow even for a self-existing void so he makes its pattern an eternal idea in the divine mind. Before Philo there was no explicit theory of creation *ex nihilo* ever postulated in Jewish or Greek traditions. Both Philo and Plato do not explain how the reflections (*eidola*) of Forms are made in the world of senses. They do not attribute them to God or the Demiurge because it would be contrary to their conception of God as "good" and "desiring that all things should come as near as possible to being like himself." God could not create the copies of the Forms which should be "disordered." It seems then that the primordial unorganized matter was spontaneously produced on the pattern of the Ideas. The Logos would shape the elements from this preexistent matter, first into heavy (or dense) and light (or rare) elements which were differentiated properly into water and earth, and air and fire (*Her.* 134-140; 143). As in Plato certain geometrical descriptions characterize Philo's elements. Fire was characterized by a pyramid, air by an octahedron, water by an icosahedron, and earth by a cube (QG 3.49). In Plato's theory too, one can envision a sort of automatic reflection of the Forms in the Receptacle due to the properties of Forms. God could not, according to Philo's philosophy, create the preexistent matter. "And what God praised was not the materials which he had worked up in creation, destitute of life and melody, and easily dissolved, and moreover in their own intrinsic nature perishable, and out of proportion and full of iniquity, but rather his own skillful work, completed according to one equal and well-proportioned power and

knowledge always alike and identical." (*Her.* 160). Logically, God is for Philo indirectly the source of preexistent matter but Philo does not ascribe to God even the shaping of matter directly. In fact this unorganized matter never existed because it was simultaneously ordered into organized matter – the four elements from which the world is made.

10. Doctrine of Miracles: Naturalism and Comprehension

Closely connected with Philo's doctrine of creation is his doctrine of miracles. His favorite statement is that "everything is possible with God." This, however, does not mean that God can act outside the natural order of things or his own nature. Thus Philo emphasizes that God's miraculous works are within the realm of the natural order. Doing this he extends the natural order to encompass the biblical miracles and tries to explain them by their coincidence with natural events. For example, the miracle at the Red Sea which he characterizes as a "mighty work of nature" (*Mos.* 1.165), or the plague of darkness as a total eclipse (*Mos.* 1.123), or the story of Balaam as an allegorical one (*Cher.* 32-35). This was the tendency inherited from some Stoics who attempted to explain miracles of divination as events preordered in nature by the divine power pervading it. Similarly Philo considers the biblical miracles as a part of the eternal pattern of the Logos acting in nature. Augustine considers miracles as implanted in the destiny of the cosmos since the time of its creation. Philo and rabbinic literature emphasize the miraculous and marvelous character of nature itself. All natural things are wonderful, but are "despised by us by reason of our familiarity with them" and all things with which we are unaccustomed, make an impression on us "for the love of novelty" (*Mos.* 1.2-213). Even in modern Jewish teaching there is a tendency to explain the miraculous by the natural. Thus the one can find a certain discrepancy in Philo's writing: on one hand Philo is rationalist and naturalist in the spirit of Greek philosophical tradition, on the other, he follows popular religion to preserve the biblical tradition. Philo emphasizes, however, that we are limited in our human capabilities to "comprehend everything" about the physical world, and it is better to "suspend our judgment" than to err:

But since we are found to be influenced in different manners by the same things at different times, we should have nothing positive to assert about anything, inasmuch as what appears has no settled or stationary existence, but is subject to various, and multiform, and ever-recurring changes. For it follows of necessity, since the imagination is unstable, that judgment formed by it must be unstable; and there are many reasons for this (*Ebr.* 170).

But we are able to comprehend things by comparing them with their opposites and thus arriving at their true nature. The same applies to what is virtue and to what is vice, and to what is just and good and to what is unjust and bad.

And, indeed, if any one considers everything that is in the world, he will be able to arrive at a proper estimate of its character, by taking it in the same manner; for each separate thing is by itself incomprehensible, but by a comparison with another thing, is easy to understand (*Ebr.* 187).

The same reasoning he extends to differences between national customs and ancient laws which vary according to countries, nations, cities, different villages, even private houses and instruction received by people from childhood.

And since this is the case, who is foolish enough and ridiculous as to affirm positively that such and such a thing is just, or wise, or honorable, or expedient? For whatever this man defines as such, some one else, who from his childhood has learnt a contrary lesson, will be sure to deny (*Ebr.* 197).

11. Doctrine of the Logos in Philo's Writings

The pivotal and the most developed doctrine in Philo's writings on which hinges his entire philosophical system, is his doctrine of the Logos. By developing this doctrine he fused Greek philosophical concepts with Hebrew religious thought and provided the foundation for Christianity, first in the development of the Christian Pauline myth and speculations of John, later in the Hellenistic Christian Logos and Gnostic doctrines of the second century. All other doctrines of Philo hinge on his interpretation of divine existence and action. The term *Logos* was widely used in the Greco-Roman culture and in Judaism. Through most schools of Greek philosophy, this term was used to designate a rational, intelligent and thus vivifying principle of the universe. This principle was deduced from an understanding of the universe as a living reality and by comparing it to a living creature. Ancient people did not have the dynamic concept of "function," therefore, every phenomenon had to have an underlying factor, agent, or principle responsible for its occurrence. In the Septuagint version of the Old Testament the term *logos* (Hebrew *davar*) was used frequently to describe God's utterances (Gen. 1:3, 6,9; 3:9,11; Ps. 32:9), God's action (Zech. 5:1-4; Ps. 106:20; Ps. 147:15), and messages of prophets by means of which God communicated his will to his people (Jer. 1:4-19, 2:1-7; Ezek. 1:3; Amos 3:1). *Logos* is used here only as a figure of speech designating God's activity or action. In the so-called Jewish wisdom literature we find the concept of Wisdom (*hokhmah* and *sophia*) which could be to some degree interpreted as a separate personification or individualization (hypostatization), but it is

contrasted often with human stupidity. In the Hebrew culture it was a part of the metaphorical and poetic language describing divine wisdom as God's attribute and it clearly refers to a human characteristic in the context of human earthly existence. The Greek, metaphysical concept of the Logos is in sharp contrast to the concept of a personal God described in anthropomorphic terms typical of Hebrew thought. Philo made a synthesis of the two systems and attempted to explain Hebrew thought in terms of Greek philosophy by introducing the Stoic concept of the Logos into Judaism. In the process the Logos became transformed from a metaphysical entity into an extension of a divine and transcendental anthropomorphic being and mediator between God and men. Philo offered various descriptions of the Logos.

a. The Utterance of God

Following the Jewish mythical tradition, Philo represents the Logos as the utterance of God found in the Jewish scripture of the Old Testament since God's words do not differ from his actions (*Sacr.* 8; *Somn.* 1.182; *Op.* 13).

b. The Divine Mind

Philo accepts the Platonic intelligible Forms. Forms exist forever though the impressions they make may perish with the substance on which they were made (*Det.* 75-77; *Mut.* 80, 122. 146; *Cher.* 51). They are not, however, beings existing separately, only exist in the mind of God as his thoughts and powers. Philo explicitly identifies Forms with God's powers. Those powers are his glory, though invisible and sensed only by the purest intellect. "And though they are by nature inapprehensible in their essence, still they show a kind of impression or copy of their energy and operation" (*Spec. leg.* 1.45-50). In his doctrine of God Philo interprets the Logos, which is the Divine Mind, as the Form of Forms (Platonic), the Idea of Ideas or the sum total of Forms or Ideas. Logos is the indestructible Form of wisdom comprehensible only by the intellect (*Det.* 75-76; *Mig.* 103).

c. God's Transcendent Power

The Logos which God begat eternally because it is a manifestation of God's thinking-acting (*Prov.* 1.7; *Sacr.* 65; *Mos.* 1.283), is an agent that unites two powers of the transcendent God. Philo relates that in an inspiration his own soul told him:

...that in the one living and true God there were two supreme and primary powers, Goodness [or Creative Power] and Authority [or Regent Power]; and that by his Goodness he had created every thing; and that by his Authority he

governed all that he had created; and that the third thing which was between the two, and had the effect of bringing them together was the Logos, for it was owing to the Logos that God was both a ruler and good (*Cher.* 1.27-28).

And further, Philo finds in the Bible indications of the operation of the Logos, e.g., the biblical cherubim are the symbols of the two powers of God but the flaming sword (Gen. 3.24) is the symbol of the Logos conceived before all things and before all manifest (*Cher.* 1.27-28; *Sacr.* 59; *Abr.* 124-125; *Her.* 166; *QE* 2.68). Philo's description of the Logos (the Mind of God) corresponds to the Greek concept of mind as hot and fiery. Philo obviously refers in these powers to the Unlimited (*apeiron*) and the Limited (*peras*) of Plato's *Philebus* and earlier Pythagorean tradition, and they will later reappear in Plotinus as *Nous*. In Plato these two principles or powers operate at the metaphysical, cosmic (cosmic soul) and human (human soul) levels. Philo considers these powers to be inherent in transcendental God, and that God himself may be thought of as multiplicity in unity. The Beneficent (Creative) and Regent (Authoritative) Powers are called God and Lord, respectively. Goodness is Boundless Power, Creative, and God. The Regent Power is also Punitive Power and Lord (*Her.* 166). Creative Power, moreover, permeates the world, the power by which God made and ordered all things. Philo follows the ideas of the Stoics that *nous* pervades every part of the universe as it does the soul in us. Therefore, Philo asserts that the aspect of God which transcends his powers (which we have to understand to be the Logos) cannot be conceived of in terms of place but as pure being, "but that power of his by which he made and ordered all things called God, in accordance with the etymology of that name, enfolds the whole and passes through the parts of the universe" (*Conf.* 136-137). According to Philo, the two powers of God are separated by God himself who is standing above in the midst of them (*Her.* 166). Referring to Genesis 18: 2 Philo claims that God and his two Powers are in reality one. To the human mind they appear as a Triad, with God above the powers that belong to him: "For this cannot be so keen of spirit that, it can see Him who is above the powers that belong to Him, (namely) God, distinct from everything else. For so soon as one sets eyes on God, there also appear together with His being, the ministering powers, so that in place of one he makes the appearance of a triad (*QG* 4.2)." In addition to these two main powers, there are other powers of the Father and his Logos, including merciful and legislative (*Fug.* 94-95).

d. First-born Son of God

The Logos has an origin, but as God's thought it also has eternal generation. It exists as such before everything else all of which are secondary products of God's thought and therefore it is called the "first-born." The Logos is thus more

than a quality, power, or characteristic of God; it is an entity eternally generated as an extension, to which Philo ascribes many names and functions. The Logos is the first-begotten Son of the Uncreated Father: "For the Father of the universe has caused him to spring up as the eldest son, whom, in another passage, he [Moses] calls the first-born; and he who is thus born, imitating the ways of his father, has formed such and such species, looking to his archetypal patterns" (*Conf.* 63). This picture is somewhat confusing because we learn that in the final analysis the Creative Power is also identified with the Logos. The Creative Power is logically prior to the Regent Power since it is conceptually older. Though the powers are of equal age, the creative is prior because one is king not of the nonexistent but of what has already come into being (QE 2.62). These two powers thus delimit the bounds of heaven and the world. The Creative Power is concerned that things that come into being through it should not be dissolved, and the Regent Power that nothing either exceeds or is robbed of its due, all being arbitrated by the laws of equality through which things continue eternally (QE 2.64). The positive properties of God may be subdivided into these two polar forces; therefore, the expression of the One is the Logos that constitutes the manifestation of God's thinking, acting (*Prov.* 1.7; *Sacr.* 65; *Mos.* 1.283). According to Philo these powers of the Logos can be grasped at various levels. Those who are at the summit level grasp them as constituting an indivisible unity. At the two lower levels, respectively, are those who know the Logos as the Creative Power and beneath them those who know it as the Regent Power (*Fug.* 94-95; *Abr.* 124-125). The next level down represents those limited to the sensible world, unable to perceive the intelligible realities (*Gig.* 20). At each successively lower level of divine knowledge the image of God's essence is increasingly more obscured. These two powers will appear again in Plotinus. Here Undefined or Unlimited Intelligible Matter proceeds from the One and then turns back to its source (*Enneads* 2.4.5; 5.4.2; 6.7.17)

e. Universal Bond: in the Physical World and in the Human Soul

The Logos is the bond holding together all the parts of the world. And as a part of the human soul it holds the body together and permits its operation. In the mind of a wise man thoroughly purified, it allows preservation of virtues in an unimpaired condition (*Fug.* 112). "And the Logos, which connects together and fastens every thing, is peculiarly full itself of itself, having no need whatever of any thing beyond" (*Her.* 188).

f. Immanent Reason

The reasoning capacity of a human mind is but a portion of the all-pervading Divine Logos. Mind is a special gift to humans from God and it has divine

essence, therefore, as such, it is imperishable. By receiving this humans received freedom and the power of spontaneous will free from necessity (*Deus.* 47). Philo emphasizes that man "has received this one extraordinary gift, intellect, which is accustomed to comprehend the nature of all bodies and of all things at the same time." Thus humanity resembles God in the sense of having free volition for unlike plants and other animals, the soul of man received from God the power of voluntary motion and in this respect resembles God (*Deus.* 48). This concept, that it is chiefly in the intellect and free volition that makes humans differ from other life forms, has a long history which can be traced to Anaxagoras and Aristotle. Philo calls "men of God" those people who made God-inspired intellectual life their dominant issue. Such men "have entirely transcended the sensible sphere, and migrated to the intelligible world, and dwell there enrolled as citizens of the Commonwealth of Ideas, which are imperishable, and incorporeal ... those who are born of God are priests and prophets who have not thought fit to mix themselves up in the constitutions of this world...." (*Gig.* 61). Philo writes in reference to the Old Testament expression that God "breathed into" (equivalent of "inspired" or "gave life to") inanimate things that through this act God extended his spirit into humans (LA 1.37). Though his spirit is distributed among men it is not diminished (*Gig.* 27). The nature of the reasoning power in men is indivisible from the Divine Logos, but "though they are indivisible themselves, they divide an innumerable multitude of other things." Just as the Divine Logos divided and distributed everything in nature (that is, it gave qualities to undifferentiated, primordial matter), so the human mind by exertion of its intellect is able to divide everything and everybody into an infinite number of parts. And this is possible because it resembles the Logos of the Creator and Father of the universe: "So that, very naturally, the two things which thus resemble each other, both the mind which is in us and that which is above us, being without parts and invisible, will still be able in a powerful manner to divide and distribute [comprehend] all existing things" (*Her.* 234-236; *Det.* 90). Uninitiated minds are unable to apprehend the Existent by itself; they only perceive it through its actions. To them God appears as a Triad -- himself and his two Powers: Creative and Ruling. To the "purified soul," however, God appears as One.

When, therefore, the soul is shone upon by God as if at noonday, and when it is wholly and entirely filled with that light which is appreciable only by the intellect, and by being wholly surrounded with its brilliancy is free from all shackle or darkness, it then perceives a threefold image of one subject, one image of the living God, and others of the other two, as if they were shadows irradiated by it but he claims that the term shadow is just a more vivid representation of the matter intended to be intimated. Since this is not the actual truth, but in order that one may when speaking keep as close to the truth as

possible, the one in the middle is the Father of the universe, who in the sacred scripture is called by his proper name, I am that I am; and the beings on each side are those most ancient powers which are always close to the living God, one of which is called his Creative Power, and the other his Royal Power. And the Creative Power is God, for it is by this that he made and arranged the universe; and the Royal Power is the Lord, for it is fitting that the Creator should lord it over and govern the creature. Therefore, the middle person of the three, being attended by each of his powers as by body-guard, presents to the mind, which is endowed with the faculty of sight, a vision at one time of one being, and at another time of three; of one when the soul being completely purified, and having surmounted not only the multitude of numbers, but also the number two, which is the neighbour of the unit, hastens onward to that idea which is devoid of mixture, free from all combination, and by itself in need of nothing else whatever; and of three, when, not being as yet made perfect as to the important virtues, it is still seeking for initiation in those of less consequence, and is not able to attain to a comprehension of the living God by its own unassisted faculties without the aid of something else, but can only do so by judging of his deeds, whether as creator or as governor. This then, as they say, is the second best thing; and it no less partakes in the opinion which is dear to and devoted to God. But the first-mentioned disposition has no such share, but is itself the very God-loving and God-beloved opinion itself, or rather it is truth which is older than opinion, and more valuable than any seeming (*Abr.* 119-123).

The one category of enlightened people is able to comprehend God through a vision beyond the physical universe. It is as though they advanced on a heavenly ladder and conjectured the existence of God through an inference (*Praem.* 40). The other category apprehends him through himself, as light is seen by light. For God gave man such a perception "as should prove to him that God exists, and not to show him what God is." Philo believes that even the existence of God "cannot possibly be contemplated by any other being; because, in fact, it is not possible for God to be comprehended by any being but himself " (*Praem.* 39-40). Philo adds, "Only men who have raised themselves upward from below, so as, through the contemplation of his works, to form a conjectural conception of the Creator by a probable train of reasoning" (*Praem.* 43) are holy, and are his servants. Next Philo explains how such men have an impression of God's existence as revealed by God himself, by the similitude of the sun (*Mut.* 4-6) a concept which he borrowed from Plato. As light is seen in consequence of its own presence so, "In the same manner God, being his own light, is perceived by himself alone, nothing and no other being co-operating with or assisting him, a being at all able to contribute to pure comprehension of his existence; But these men have arrived at the real truth, who form their ideas of God from God, of

light from light" (*Praem.* 45-46). As Plato and Philo had done, Plotinus later used this image of the sun. Thus the Logos, eternally created (begotten), is an expression of the immanent powers of God, and at the same time, it emanates into everything in the world.

g. Immanent Mediator of the Physical Universe

In certain places in his writings Philo accepts the Stoic theory of the immanent Logos as the power or Law binding the opposites in the universe and mediating between them, and directing the world. For example, Philo envisions that the world is suspended in a vacuum and asks, how is it that the world does not fall down since it is not held by any solid thing. Philo then gives the answer that the Logos extending himself from the center to its bounds and from its extremities to the center again, runs nature's course joining and binding fast all its parts. Likewise the Logos prevents the earth from being dissolved by all the water contained within. The Logos produces a harmony (a favorite expression of the Stoics) between various parts of the universe (*Plant.* 8-10). Thus Philo sees God as only indirectly the Creator of the world: God is the author of the invisible, intelligible world which served as a model for the Logos. Philo says Moses called this archetypal heavenly power by various names: "the beginning, the image, and the sight of God" (LA 1.43). Following the views of Plato and the Stoics, Philo believed that in all existing things there must be an active cause, and a passive subject; and that the active cause Philo designates as the Logos. He gives the impression that he believed that the Logos functions like the Platonic "Soul of the World" (*Aet.* 84).

h. The Angel of the Lord, Revealer of God

Philo describes the Logos as the revealer of God symbolized in the Scripture (Gen. 31:13; 16:8; etc) by an angel of the Lord (*Somn.* 1.228-239; *Cher.* 1-3). The Logos is the first-born and the eldest and chief of the angels.

i. Multi-Named Archetype

Philo's Logos has many names (*Conf.* 146). Philo identifies his Logos with Wisdom of Proverbs 8:22 (*Ebr.* 31). Moreover, Moses, according to Philo called this Wisdom "Beginning," "Image," "Sight of God." And his personal wisdom is an imitation of the archetypal Divine Wisdom. All terrestrial wisdom and virtue are but copies and representations of the heavenly Logos (LA 1.43, 45-46).

j. Soul-Nourishing Manna and Wisdom

God sends "the stream" from his Wisdom which irrigates God-loving souls; consequently they become filled with "manna." Manna is described by Philo as a "generic thing" coming from God. It does not come from God directly, however: "the most generic is God, and next is the Logos of God, the other things subsist in word (Logos) only" (LA 2.86). According to Philo, Moses called manna "the most ancient Logos of God (*Det.* 118)." Next Philo explains that men are "nourished by the whole word (Logos) of God, and by every portion of it ... Accordingly, the soul of the more perfect man is nourished by the whole word (Logos); but we must be contented if we are nourished by a portion of it" (LA 3.175-176). And "the Wisdom of God, which is the nurse and foster-mother and educator of those who desire incorruptible food ... immediately supplies food to those which are brought forth by her ... but the fountain of divine wisdom is borne along, at one time in a more gentle and moderate stream, and at another with greater rapidity and a more exceeding violence and impetuosity....(*Det.* 115-117). This Wisdom as the Daughter of God "has obtained a nature intact and undefiled both because of her own propriety and the dignity of him who begot her." Having identified the Logos with Wisdom, Philo runs into a grammatical problem: in the Greek language "wisdom" (*sophia*) is feminine and "word" (*logos*) is masculine; moreover, Philo saw Wisdom's function as masculine. So he explains that Wisdom's name is feminine, but her nature is masculine:

Indeed all the virtues have women's designations, but powers and activities of truly perfect men. For that which comes after God, even if it were the most venerable of all other things, holds second place, and was called feminine in contrast to the Creator of the universe, who is masculine, and in accordance with its resemblance to everything else. For the feminine always falls short and is inferior to the masculine, which has priority. Let us then pay no attention to the discrepancy in the terms, and say that the daughter of God, Wisdom, is both masculine and the father, inseminating and engendering in souls a desire to learn discipline, knowledge, practical insight, notable and laudable actions (*Fug.* 50-52).

k. Intermediary Power

The fundamental doctrine propounded by Philo is that of Logos as an intermediary power, a messenger and mediator between God and the world.

And the father who created the universe has given to his archangel and most ancient Logos a pre-eminent gift, to stand on the confines of both, and separate

that which had been created from the Creator. And this same Logos is continually a suppliant to the immortal God on behalf of the mortal race, which is exposed to affliction and misery; and is also the ambassador, sent by the Ruler of all, to the subject race. And the Logos rejoices.... saying "And I stood in the midst, between the Lord and you" (Num. 16:48); neither being uncreated as God, nor yet created as you, but being in the midst between these two extremities, like a hostage, as it were, to both parties (*Her.* 205-206).

When speaking of the high priest, Philo describes the Logos as God's son, a perfect being procuring forgiveness of sins and blessings: "For it was indispensable that the man who was consecrated to the Father of the world [the high priest] should have as a paraclete, his son, the being most perfect in all virtue, to procure forgiveness of sins, and a supply of unlimited blessings" (*Mos.* 2.134). Philo transforms the Stoic impersonal and immanent Logos into a being who was neither eternal like God nor created like creatures, but begotten from eternity. This being is a mediator giving hope to men and who "was sent down to earth." God, according to Philo, sends "the stream of his own wisdom" to men "and causes the changed soul to drink of unchangeable health; for the abrupt rock is the wisdom of God, which being both sublime and the first of things he quarried out of his own powers." After the souls are watered they are filled with the manna which "is called something which is the primary genus of everything. But the most universal of all things is God; and in the second place is the Logos of God"(LA 2.86). Through the Logos of God men learn all kinds of instruction and everlasting wisdom (*Fug.* 127-120). The Logos is the "cupbearer of God ... being itself in an unmixed state, the pure delight and sweetness, and pouring forth and joy, and ambrosial medicine of pleasure and happiness" (*Somn.* 2.249). This wisdom was represented by the tabernacle of the Old Testament which was "a thing made after the model and in imitation of Wisdom" and sent down to earth "in the midst of our impurity in order that we may have something whereby we may be purified, washing off and cleansing all those things which dirty and defile our miserable life, full of all evil reputation as it is" (*Her.* 112-113). "God therefore sows and implants terrestrial virtue in the human race, being an imitation and representation of the heavenly virtue" (LA 1.45).

I. "God"

In three passages Philo describes the Logos even as God:

a.) Commenting on Genesis 22:16 Philo explains that God could only swear by himself (LA 3.207).

b.) When the scripture uses the Greek term for God *ho theos*, it refers to the true God, but when it uses the term *theos*, without the article *ho*, it refers not to the God, but to his most ancient Logos (*Somn.* 1.229-230).

c.) Commenting on Genesis 9:6 Philo states the reference to creation of man after the image of God is to the second deity, the Divine Logos of the Supreme being and to the father himself, because it is only fitting that the rational soul of man cannot be in relation to the preeminent and transcendent Divinity (QG 2.62).

Philo himself, however, explains that to call the Logos "God" is not a correct appellation (*Somn.* 1.230). Also, through this Logos, which men share with God, men know God and are able to perceive Him (LA 1.37-38).

m. Summary of Philo's Concept of the Logos

Philo's doctrine of the Logos is blurred by his mystical and religious vision, but his Logos is clearly the second individual in one God as a hypostatization of God's Creative Power - Wisdom. The supreme being is God and the next is Wisdom or the Logos of God (*Op.* 24). Logos has many names as did Zeus (LA 1.43,45,46), and multiple functions. Earthly wisdom is but a copy of this celestial Wisdom. It was represented in historical times by the tabernacle through which God sent an image of divine excellence as a representation and copy of Wisdom (Lev. 16:16; *Her.* 112-113). The Divine Logos never mixes with the things which are created and thus destined to perish, but attends the One alone. This Logos is apportioned into an infinite number of parts in humans, thus we impart the Divine Logos. As a result we acquire some likeness to the Father and the Creator of all (*Her.* 234-236). The Logos is the Bond of the universe and mediator extended in nature. The Father eternally begat the Logos and constituted it as an unbreakable bond of the universe that produces harmony (*Plant.* 9-10). The Logos, mediating between God and the world, is neither uncreated as God nor created as men. So in Philo's view the Father is the Supreme Being and the Logos, as his chief messenger, stands between Creator and creature. The Logos is an ambassador and suppliant, neither unbegotten nor begotten as are sensible things (*Her.* 205). Wisdom, the Daughter of God, is in reality masculine because powers have truly masculine descriptions, whereas virtues are feminine. That which is in the second place after the masculine Creator was called feminine, according to Philo, but her priority is masculine; so the Wisdom of God is both masculine and feminine (*Fug.* 50-52). Wisdom flows from the Divine Logos (*Fug.* 137-138). The Logos is the Cupbearer of God. He pours himself into happy souls (*Somn.* 2.249). The immortal part of the soul comes from the divine breath of the Father/Ruler as a part of his Logos.

12. List of abbreviations to Philo's works

Abr. De Abrahamo;
Aet. De Aeternitate Mundi;
Agr. De Agricultura;
Anim. De Animalibus;
Cher. De Cherubim;
Conf. De Confusione Linguarum;
Congr. De Congressu Eruditionis Gratia;
Cont. De Vita Contemplativa;
Decal. De Decalogo;
Det. Quod Deterius Potiori Insidiari Soleat;
Deus. Quod Deus Sit Immutabilis;
Ebr. De Ebrietate;
Flac. In Flaccum;
Fug. De Fuga et Inventionem;
Gig. De Gigantibus;
Her. Quis Rerum Divinarum Heres Sit;
Hypoth. Hypothesica;
Jos. De Iosepho;
LA Legum Allegoriarum;
Legat. Legatio ad Gaium;
Mig. De Migratione Abrahami;
Mut. De Mutatione Nominum;
Op. De Opificio Mundi;
Plant. De Plantatione;
Post. De Posteritate Caini;
Praem. De Praemiis et Poenis;
Prob. Quod Omnis Probus Liber Sit;
Prov. De Providentia;
QE Quaestiones et Solutiones in Exodum;
QG Quaestiones et Solutiones in Genesim;
Sacr. De Sacrificiis Abelis et Caini;
Sobr. De Sobrietate;
Somn. De Somniis;
Spec. leg. De Specialibus Legibus;
Virt. De Virtutibus.

Minor Prophets Questionnaire

Hosea

1. Read Hosea 1:2-9. How do you think Hosea felt about marrying a prostitute? How do you think that Gomer felt to be married to a “man of God?”
2. Has God ever asked you to do something you or others felt was crazy? How did you deal with that?
3. Read Hosea 4:1-2, and 13:1-2. What were the sins of Israel? (Another name for Israel used by Hosea is “Ephraim.”)
4. Read Hosea 14:1-3. What does God want Israel to do?
5. Reflect about your life and your faithfulness to the commandments of God. Is there an area in your life that needs correction and change? Confess that to God and ask for his mercy and forgiveness.

Hint: One of the difficulties in reading Hosea is the fluctuations of voices speaking. Sometimes God is speaking personally to Israel, then suddenly Israel is being spoken about in third person. For example, notice the voice change from Hosea 6:4-6 (God speaking directly to Israel) and Hosea 6:7-9 (someone speaking about Israel in third person). If you get confused reading the letter, stop and pay attention to the tense and voice.

Amos

1. In a series of denouncements against foreign enemies, Amos prophesies judgment against them all (1:2-2:16). This is an assertion of the sovereignty of God over all the nations. In the end, the archers, warriors, and fleet-footed soldiers will not get away from God (2:15). How do you feel about this sovereignty of God in a world filled with terror, corrupt leaders in the world, and the oppression of young girls in the slave trade? Does the sovereignty of God confuse or comfort you?
2. The “Day of the Lord” was normally considered a day of triumph when God would finally defeat the enemies of Israel and establish Israel as the nation to whom all other nations would come for wisdom, justice, and direction. However, Amos tells the Israelites the “Day of the Lord” is going to be a day of judgment against Israel, not a victory for her over her enemies (5:18-20). Do we sometimes presume upon God’s grace and favor without thought of our need for

repentance and forgiveness? Take a moment and ask God to reveal your sins and shortcomings. Then confess them to him and ask for forgiveness.

3. Perhaps the most famous passage in Amos comes from 5:21-24. Verse 24 became the epitaph that was inscribed on slain Baptist preacher Martin Luther King, Jr. : “Let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream.” Perhaps you’ve read the book or recently see the movie “The Help.” How does Amos’ call for justice and righteousness affect how we interpret this movie and the relationship between the races in our country?

4. In 8:1-6 Amos is given a vision of a “basket of ripe fruit.” What is God trying to show Amos? Think about this passage this week when you eat a ripe piece of fruit. Recall this vision and ask God to give you thoughts about this for your life.

5. Amos declares “Are not the Israelites the same to me as the Cushites? (9:7). The Cushites were a dark-skinned people who lived south of Egypt. What do you think Amos meant by this rhetorical question? How would you deal with the strange statement, “Are not Christians the same to me as Muslims?”

Obadiah

1. Read this shortest book in the Old Testament. Also read a companion passage Jeremiah 49:7-22. What is the tone of the book?

2. The Edomites are the descendants of Esau, the twin brother of Jacob. The story of their rivalry is found in Genesis 25:19-27:45. They continued to be enemies throughout their history. This prophecy can remind us of the importance of reconciling family differences and not letting them linger lest they take on an even larger life. Is there any conflict in your family? Between you and a sister or brother? What can you do to resolve instead of perpetuate this conflict?

3. Obadiah says, “*The pride of your heart has deceived you, . . . you who say to yourself, ‘Who can bring me down to the ground?’*” (v 3) Paul said in his letter to the Romans, ““*Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited.*” Do you associate with anyone of “low position”? Why is that?

4. Edom is accused of standing idly by while Jerusalem is being ransacked (vv 10-11). Have you ever witnessed how most people will stand by idly when

another person is being treated unfairly, harshly, etc? Recall that story. Why do you think people acted that way?

5. Obadiah prophesies that Edom will “*reap what it has sown*” (v 15). Do you believe this is a true principle, that people will reap what they sew, that their deeds will return upon their own head? Explain your position.

6. Obadiah said, “*There will be no survivors from the house of Esau [Edom]*” (v 18). Compare this with Jesus’ words on the cross, “Father, forgive them for they know not what they do” (Lk 23:34). Aren’t you glad Jesus offered us another model for dealing with those who have been our enemies? Imagine what your world would be like if it was directed by forgiveness rather than retribution

Jonah

1. Jonah is the most well-known of the Minor Prophets because it’s a dramatic story which includes a big fish instead of a series of sermons. What is your favorite Old Testament story and why? Favorite New Testament story?

2. God calls Jonah to do something he doesn’t want to do: to preach the Word of God to the great city of Ninevah. Jonah runs from God instead of doing his will, with disastrous consequences. Can you recall a time in your life when you ran from God’s call? What happened? Did God ever get your attention or are you still running?

3. When Jonah finally went to the city of Ninevah to preach, the entire city repented, including the cows. One would think Jonah would be pleased with his preaching success. Instead he is angry with God for turning the hearts of the people toward the right. This anger exposes an ugly streak in Jonah that rejoices over the evil and doom of others more than their forgiveness and reconciliation with God. Most scholars believe this is an allegory about Israel’s stubborn refusal to desire the repentance of other nations. Do we sometimes wish evil upon evil people more than we wish they would repent and be forgiven by God? Is there someone you are holding a grudge against?

4. The great fish a small part of the story, and yet the one most memorable. The first thing we remember about Jonah is that he was swallowed by the great fish. At first it might seem the great fish was an enemy and that its belly would be a terrible place to be. However, the alternative was for Jonah to drown in the tumultuous sea. The great fish is, indeed, a place of refuge for Jonah for the next 3 days. Where are those places in your journey where you have received

refuge, Sabbath rest, or healing? How did God care for you in these “bellies of the great fish.”

5. Jonah makes one of the most profound theological statements about God in the Old Testament (4:2). What did he say? Why is this so important?

Micah

1. Micah has some of the most memorable passages in all the OT. The setting of one of these is a trial between Israel and God found in 6:1-8.

What was the charge against Israel?

What were the things that Israel did to please God that were useless?

What did God want from Israel?

2. In this same passage God asks Israel to remember all that he has done for Israel (v 4-5). What had God done for Israel that he wanted them to remember? Name three things God has done for you?

3. Micah 6:8 may be one of the most profound and well-known statements in the entire OT. It speaks of what God wants from us. What are those things? What does it mean to you “to walk humbly with your God”?

4. Another well-known passage is found in Micah 4:1-5. It is a text about the future, when all the nations will come to the Lord’s mountain to learn and live the ways of God. What will happen in that day? Is this just “pie in the sky” thinking? Is this vision of the “peaceable kingdom,” as it is sometimes called, something we should strive for or is it totally out of our hands?

5. Micah concludes with a word of hope grounded in a God who forgives (7:18-20). What words does Micah use to describe God? How does this God appeal to you?

Nahum

1. The book of Nahum is a short oracle – which is something like sermon – all about the judgment of the city of Ninevah. Reading these three short chapters in one setting will take about 5-10 minutes. What is the feeling and mood you receive from reading this sermon?

2. Ninevah is the capital city of Assyria, the dominant city in Ancient Near East region in the 700’s BC. The Assyrians destroyed Samaria, the capital city of

Israel in 722 BC. Nahum, writing after this, around 650-620BC, is prophesying the doom of Ninevah. What is going to happen to Ninevah (see 2:5-10)?

3. Why was Nahum condemning Ninevah? (See 3:1-4)

4. The oracle ends with all of Ninevah's neighbours applauding because she has finally been defeated and humiliated (3:19). Do you recall witnessing a bully finally getting his comeuppance? It could've have been the school yard bully who was finally humbled or a work colleague who finally was put in her place after abusing fellow workers for years. What was it like to witness that?

5. Nahum is one of the most negative, judgment-filled book in the Bible? What value you does this kind of book bring to you as a Christian?

6. The book of Jonah was also about Ninevah, but with a very different tone and theme? Nahum is speaking inevitable judgment against Ninevah while Jonah was called to go to Ninevah and preach God's message calling the city to repentance. What strikes you about this vast disparity?

Habakkuk

Note: Before reading, it is important to note that Habakkuk is like a lot of other minor prophets – it is difficult to differentiate between when Habakkuk is speaking and when God is replying. As you read, it may be helpful to make notes of when you think the speaker changes from Habakkuk to God (and even "the nations"), and vice-versa. If you're not sure, don't worry. Even Old Testament scholars have trouble agreeing about this issue!

1. What do you think is Habakkuk's biggest complaint (as mentioned in 2:1) in this book? Have you ever felt like Habakkuk as you've looked around and seen unrighteous people "getting away with stuff"?

2. God responds to Habakkuk two times (In chapter 1, and 2:2-20). What is the basic theme or idea behind God's response?

3. This book is difficult to read because on some levels, it is giving a theodicy (a defence of God's justice/character in the face of evil). Theodicies (defences of God) can sometimes be helpful, but often times they fail to satisfy those experiencing injustice. Is Habakkuk satisfied with God's answers to his complaints? Are you satisfied with God's reply?

4. It is easy to read this book and identify with Habakkuk and the nations who are being oppressed and experiencing injustice. After all, we've all been the recipients of unfair, unrighteous actions. But in what ways might you be contributing to someone else's oppression? In what ways are you like the Chaldeans in this passage? Are you greedy? Selfish? Apathetic to someone else's pain? Do you take out loans that you can't pay back (2:6-7)? Spend some time in prayer, asking God to reveal to you ways that you might be guilty of oppressing others.

Zephaniah

1. Zephaniah begins his prophecy informing us of his pedigree (1:1); he is a fourth-generation descendant of King Hezekiah (King of Judah from 715-686BC). Does this pedigree matter to you? Why or why not?

2. The opening words of his oracle convey a terrible judgment to come: "I will sweep away everything from the face of the earth" (1:2). It culminates on the "day of the Lord" when God "will make a sudden end of all who live in the earth" (1:18). This may be the harshest, most universal judgment pronouncement in the Bible. How does this make you feel? How does this make you feel about God?

3. God is clearly upset with Judah. What has Judah done wrong? (see 1:4-6)

4. Zephaniah describes the "Day of the Lord" in graphic terms (2:14-18). It is a terrible day of judgment against God's enemies. Some believe this day was fulfilled when Jerusalem was overthrown in 587BC. Others believe it is a reference to the final judgment against all evil. Others believe it is a reference to God's universal wrath against evil in every age. What do you think?

5. Zephaniah also makes reference to a "remnant," a small group that will be spared because of their humility and God's mercy. In 2:3 this remnant will receive lands from Judah's enemies. Then in 3:9-20 the remnant is most fully addressed as the ones who will preside over a humankind that acknowledges Yahweh. Read 3:9-20 as God's Word to you. What do you hear God saying to you?

Haggai

1. Haggai is the second shortest book, behind Obadiah, in the OT. Take five minutes to read the letter and try to grasp the overall theme of the book. What is Haggai trying to say?

2. Haggai is perhaps the most historically documented minor prophet we have in the OT. Historical dates can be calculated based on the book which covers the period of August 29, 520BC to December 18, 520 BC. For further historical support read Ezra 5:1-2, 6:14.

3. Haggai is calling for the Jews to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem (1:1-11). The prophetic call goes directly to Zerubbabel, the governor of Judah, encouraging the people to overcome their lethargy and rebuild the house of the Lord. It took 6 more years to complete but eventually the work was accomplished in 516 BC. What does Haggai say in this first chapter that may have motivated the Jews to act? What motivates you to act on behalf of God?

4. Haggai challenges the Jews to rebuild the house of the Lord by pointing out they live in nice houses: “Is it a time for you yourselves to be living in your panelled houses, while this house remains a ruin?” (1:4) What do you think Haggai would say to our church about our facilities as they are compared with our homes?

5. Haggai declares that the people have suffered (droughts, poor crops, etc) because the house of the Lord has been neglected (1:7-11). Zerubbabel and the people heard this, feared the Lord, and obeyed his voice (1:12-13). They got off their duffs and went to work. Do you believe that people “fear the Lord” in our days in a way that leads them to religious activity and devotion? Why or why not?

6. Think about the facilities of your church. Are you proud of them? What could you do to improve them or, do you think they need improvement?

Zechariah

1. Along with Hosea, Zechariah is the longest book of the minor prophets each being 14 chapters long. Zechariah is a difficult book to read and understand because of its varied literary styles (esp. apocalyptic imagery). It would be helpful, as you read, to be aware of an outline provided by most annotated Bibles. This will help you navigate through the varied literary styles.

2. We are given a date for the beginning of Zechariah’s ministry (1:1), which is Oct/Nov. 520 BC. Zechariah likely traveled with many Jews when they returned from Babylonian exile to rebuild the city of Jerusalem and its temple in the year 538 BC. How would you have felt, as a Jew, to return to Jerusalem after living your entire life in a foreign land?

3. The main message Zechariah proclaimed to the newly returning Jews was: “Thus saith the Lord, ‘Return to me and I will return to you.’” (1:2). What do you think God meant by this? What do you think God would mean today, if he were to say this to you or people in your community of faith?

4. In 1:7-6:8 there are a series of 8 night visions Zechariah proclaims to God’s people. Read the first night vision about the red horse in the myrtle tree grove (1:7-17). What do you believe the message being conveyed is?

5. The Lord promises to bless Jerusalem in chapter 8. It’s interesting to note that when the Lord returns to Jerusalem he calls it “The City of Truth” (8:3). Then, when the Lord finally gives instructions to the people of Jerusalem, the first thing he tells them is “Speak the truth to each other” (8:16). Can you recall a time when our nation was hurt by leaders not speaking the truth? Can you recall a time when you were personally hurt by someone not speaking the truth? Why is truth so integral to a community’s well-being?

6. Zechariah ends with a prophecy declaring the Lord’s sovereign reign over the entire world (ch 14). While the language is obscure and provocative in nature, the message of God’s sovereignty is at its essence. How does faith in the sovereignty of God affect you today?

Malachi

1. Malachi is the last book of the Old Testament both chronologically and historically. It was probably written in the 5th century BC. Why do you think it was 400 years before God would come to the world in the person of Jesus?
2. Malachi rebukes the priests, the leaders of the Jewish people, for bringing damaged lambs to the tables of sacrifice as offerings to the Lord (1:6-12). How might we bring displeasing offerings to our Lord today? Think about how the Lord may look upon your offerings you bring to him.
3. Malachi again rebukes the priests because they have not offered the people true and faithful teaching (2:1-9). Where do you receive truth and faithful teaching? How do you determine if the teaching is true and faithful?
4. The Jews had begun to intermarry with people of non-Jewish faith. For this they are rebuked by Malachi (2:10-12). What are your views about a Christian marrying a non-Christian? What biblical texts offer you guidance on this issue?

5. God promises evil will be defeated and good will reign (Mal 4:1-3). If you are encountering evil or feeling discouraged that the good are trampled upon, meditate on these words, and ask God to give you patience to wait on his justice to prevail in your life and the world.

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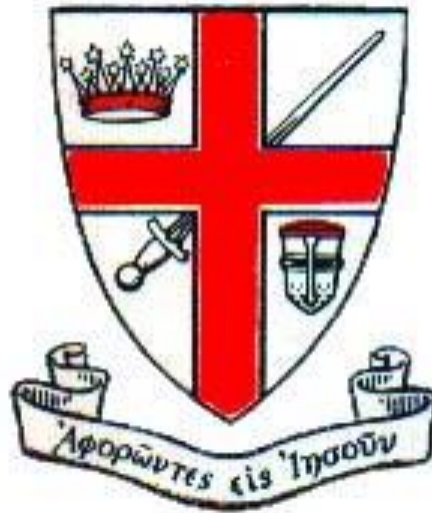
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